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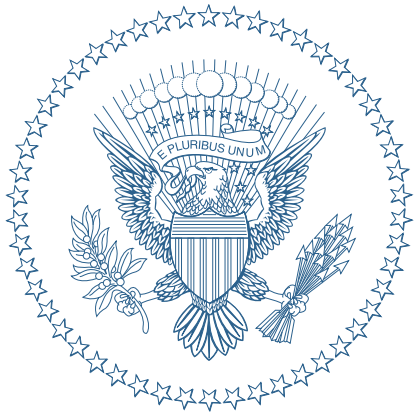
OF THE
UNITED STATES

Barack Obama



2016–2017

(IN TWO BOOKS)

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Foreword

As my Presidency entered its final year and we took stock of the progress we had made in the last seven, it was clear that, thanks to the hard work, sacrifice, and perseverance of the American people, we were stronger, more prosperous, and more respected as a country than we were when I took office.

We began the year during the longest streak of private-sector job creation in history: More than 14 million new jobs had been created, and we had seen the strongest two years of job growth since before the turn of the 21st century. In 2015, the poverty rate had fallen at its fastest rate in nearly half a century and the median household income grew at the fastest rate on record. Our auto industry had its best year ever, posting record sales levels—a testament to our early actions to rescue the iconic American industry. And all of this was accomplished while cutting our deficits by almost three-quarters as a share of the economy and ensuring health care coverage for nearly 18 million more people through the Affordable Care Act.

In February, I traveled to Springfield, Illinois—the Land of Lincoln—to address the Illinois General Assembly and discuss ways we can work together to build a better politics, one that reflects what is best in America and that recognizes that the work of self-government rests on our ability to respect one another as fellow citizens. The deep polarization between our political parties is not an abstraction: it has a real impact on how, and even whether, our democracy functions. Just days after this trip, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia passed away—leaving behind a legacy of extraordinary influence, and a vacancy on our Nation's highest bench. After an exhaustive process, I fulfilled my Constitutional responsibility by nominating Chief Judge Merrick Brian Garland of the D.C. Circuit to fill the seat. Unfortunately, Senate Republicans failed to fulfill theirs by refusing to hold even a single hearing—let alone an up or down vote—on Judge Garland, whom Senate Republicans had previously lauded as uniquely qualified to serve on the Supreme Court and had praised repeatedly when he was confirmed to the D.C. Circuit. This unprecedented abdication of responsibility by the Senate damaged faith in our justice system and appealed to the same partisan politics I spoke out against in Springfield.

This corrosive attitude that exists in our politics and across too many levels of our government—including the idea that less government is the highest good, no matter what—also resulted in the failure of a basic service for the residents of Flint, Michigan: access to clean, safe drinking water. After elevated levels of lead were revealed to be present in the city's water supply, I issued an emergency declaration, authorizing the Federal Government to coordinate disaster relief efforts and provide appropriate aid and assistance. And I saw firsthand when I traveled to Flint, the inherent good and compassion of the American people—countless citizens from across our Nation lending their time, money, and energy to see this indefensible crisis resolved—helped Flint through this tremendously difficult time.

During my final State of the Union Address at the beginning of the year, I announced a new national effort, led by Vice President Joe Biden, to cure cancer. The White House Cancer Moonshot Task Force aims to accelerate our progress in this fight by putting our Nation on a path to achieving a decade's worth of advances in just five years—bringing together patients, philanthropies, private industry, and the medical and scientific communities, all in an effort to end this devastating disease. For the loved ones we've lost, and for the families we can still save, this Task Force is working to make America the country that cures cancer once and for all.

Over the summer, the Pentagon announced the lifting of a ban on transgender individuals serving in the military, ensuring all those who want to step forward to defend America's promise know no unnecessary barriers to doing so. And in celebration of all we've achieved in the fight for LGBT rights, and in honor of those who sacrificed so much to get us to this point, I designated the first of our Nation's monuments to tell the story of the LGBT community—in all of its struggle and all of its hope. Situated at the historic Stonewall Inn, the Stonewall National Monument enshrines the legacy of a movement that ultimately became an integral part of America. Of course, LGBT Americans still face too much discrimination and hate. This reality tragically manifested itself in the most deadly shooting

in American history, when a gunman took the lives of 49 people at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando—a place that had long served as a safe haven for LGBT people to be who they truly are. We grieved this brutality as one people and resolved to let no act of hate or terror change us or the values that make us Americans.

Our Nation continued to do everything possible to confront the threat posed by ISIL, making significant progress. The terrorist organization found itself under more pressure than ever, losing key leaders and losing ground in Syria and Iraq. And our intelligence community assessed that the ranks of ISIL fighters had been reduced to the lowest levels in more than two and a half years. Despite our advances, however, the scourge of terrorism found its way to the streets of Belgium in an outrageous attack against innocent people. The United States stood strong to support our friend and ally and reaffirmed the need for the world to unite—regardless of nationality or race or faith—to ensure the safety and security of people across the globe.

We also witnessed extraordinary change abroad—change rooted in a spirit of reconciliation and renewal. In March, I became the first sitting President in nearly 90 years to visit Cuba, just over a year after we announced a process to normalize relations between our two countries. This visit marked the burying of the last remnant of the Cold War in the Americas and the extension of a hand of friendship to the Cuban people—building upon the actions we had already taken to expand commercial ties, restore direct flights and mail service, and reestablish diplomatic relations and open embassies. On the other side of the world and two months later, I visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial in Hiroshima, Japan. Offering an opportunity to mourn those who had lost their lives in the bombing during World War II and to reaffirm our shared responsibility to prevent such suffering from happening again, my trip to Hiroshima was an important reminder that the friendship between the United States and Japan has won far more for our people than we could ever claim through war. In Europe, the United Kingdom voted on and approved a referendum to separate from the European Union—a decision that we respected and that will not diminish our relationship with either. And on Earth Day, the United States joined China and countries from around the world to sign the historic Paris Agreement.

In reflecting on the first half of the final year of my Presidency, and in looking ahead to the final months of my Administration, my faith in the American people remained unwavering. Great challenges and extraordinary opportunities were to follow, and I knew that as long as we stayed true to our ideals and maintained faith in one another, our successes would continue.

Preface

This book contains the papers and speeches of the President of the United States that were issued by the Office of the Press Secretary during the period January 1–June 30, 2016. The material has been compiled and published by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration.

The material is presented in chronological order, and the dates shown in the headings are the dates of the documents or events. In instances when the release date differs from the date of the document itself, that fact is shown in the textnote. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy: Remarks are checked against an audio recording, and signed documents are checked against the original. Textnotes and cross references have been provided by the editors for purposes of identification or clarity. Speeches were delivered in Washington, DC, unless otherwise indicated. The times noted are local times. All materials that are printed in full text in the book have been indexed in the subject and name indexes and listed in the document categories list.

The Public Papers of the Presidents series was begun in 1957 in response to a recommendation of the National Historical Publications Commission. An extensive compilation of messages and papers of the Presidents covering the period 1789 to 1897 was assembled by James D. Richardson and published under congressional authority between 1896 and 1899. Since then, various private compilations have been issued, but there was no uniform publication comparable to the Congressional Record or the United States Supreme Court Reports. Many Presidential papers could be found only in the form of mimeographed White House releases or as reported in the press. The Commission therefore recommended the establishment of an official series in which Presidential writings, addresses, and remarks of a public nature could be made available.

The Commission's recommendation was incorporated in regulations of the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, issued under section 6 of the Federal Register Act (44 U.S.C. 1506), which may be found in title 1, part 10, of the Code of Federal Regulations.

A companion publication to the Public Papers series, the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, was begun in 1965 to provide a broader range of Presidential materials on a more timely basis to meet the needs of the contemporary reader. Beginning with the administration of Jimmy Carter, the Public Papers series expanded its coverage to include additional material as printed in the Weekly Compilation. On January 20, 2009, the printed Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents was superseded by the online Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents. The Daily Compilation provides a listing of the President's daily schedule and meetings, when announced, and other items of general interest issued by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Also included in the printed edition are lists of the President's nominations submitted to the Senate, materials released by the Office of the Press Secretary that are not printed in full text in the book, and proclamations, Executive orders, and other Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the *Federal Register*. This information appears in the appendixes at the end of the book.

Volumes covering the administrations of Presidents Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush are also included in the Public Papers series.

The Public Papers of the Presidents publication program is under the direction of John Hyrum Martinez, Director of the Publications and Services Division, Office of the Federal

Register. The series is produced by the Presidential and Legislative Publications Unit, Kimberly Tilliman, Supervisor. The Chief Editor of this book was Joseph K. Vetter; the Managing Editor was Joshua H. Liberatore, assisted by Amelia E. Otovo.

The frontispiece and photographs used in the portfolio were supplied by the White House Photo Office. The typography and design of the book were developed by the Government Publishing Office under the direction of Hugh N. Halpern, Director.

Oliver A. Potts
Director of the Federal Register

David S. Ferriero
Archivist of the United States

Contents

Foreword . . . v

Preface . . . vii

Cabinet . . . xi

Public Papers of Barack Obama,
January 1–June 30, 2016 . . . 1

Appendix A
Digest of Other White House Announcements . . . 859

Appendix B
Nominations Submitted to the Senate . . . 901

Appendix C
Checklist of White House Press Releases . . . 909

Appendix D
Presidential Documents Published in the *Federal Register* . . . 927

Subject Index . . . A–1

Name Index . . . B–1

Document Categories List . . . C–1

Cabinet

Vice President	Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Secretary of State	John F. Kerry
Secretary of the Treasury	Jacob J. Lew
Secretary of Defense	Ashton B. Carter
Attorney General	Loretta E. Lynch
Secretary of the Interior	Sarah M.R. "Sally" Jewell
Secretary of Agriculture	Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Commerce	Penny S. Pritzker
Secretary of Labor	Thomas E. Perez
Secretary of Health and Human Services	Sylvia Mathews Burwell
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development	Julián Castro
Secretary of Transportation	Anthony R. Foxx
Secretary of Energy	Ernest J. Moniz
Secretary of Education	John B. King, Jr. (confirmed March 14)
Secretary of Veterans Affairs	Robert A. McDonald
Secretary of Homeland Security	Jeh C. Johnson
Chief of Staff	Denis R. McDonough
Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency	Regina McCarthy
United States Trade Representative	Michael B. Froman
Director of the Office of Management and Budget	Shaun L.S. Donovan
Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers	Jason L. Furman

United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations	Samantha Power
Administrator of the Small Business Administration	Maria Contreras-Sweet

Administration of Barack Obama

2016–2017

The President's Weekly Address
January 1, 2016

Happy New Year, everybody. I am fired up for the year that stretches out before us. And that's because of what we've accomplished together over the past 7 years.

Seven years ago, our businesses were losing 800,000 jobs a month. They've now created jobs for 69 straight months, driving the unemployment rate from a high of 10 percent down to 5 percent.

Seven years ago, too many Americans went without health insurance. We've now covered more than 17 million people, dropping the rate of the uninsured below 10 percent for the very first time.

Seven years ago, we were addicted to foreign oil. Now our oil imports have plummeted, our clean energy industry is booming, and America is a global leader in the fight against climate change.

Seven years ago, there were only two States in America with marriage equality. And now there are 50.

All of this progress is because of you. And we've got so much more to do. So my New Year's resolution is to move forward on our unfinished business as much as I can. And I'll be more frequently asking for your help. That's what this American project is all about.

That's especially true for one piece of unfinished business: our epidemic of gun violence.

Last month, we remembered the third anniversary of Newtown. This Friday, I'll be thinking about my friend Gabby Giffords, 5 years into her recovery from the shooting in Tucson. And all across America, survivors of gun violence and those who lost a child or a parent or a spouse to gun violence are forced to mark such awful anniversaries every single day.

And yet Congress still hasn't done anything to prevent what happened to them from happening to other families. Three years ago, a bipartisan, commonsense bill would have required background checks for virtually everyone who buys a gun. Keep in mind, this is a policy that is supported by some 90 percent of the American people. It was supported by a majority of NRA households. But the gun lobby mobilized against it, and the Senate blocked it.

Since then, tens of thousands of our fellow Americans have been mowed down by gun violence. Tens of thousands. Each time, we're told that commonsense reforms like background checks might not have stopped the last massacre or the one before that, so we shouldn't do anything.

We know we can't stop every act of violence. But what if we tried to stop even one? What if Congress did something—anything—to protect our kids from gun violence?

A few months ago, I directed my team at the White House to look into any new actions I can take to help reduce gun violence. And on Monday, I'll meet with our Attorney General, Loretta Lynch, to discuss our options. Because I get too many letters from parents and teachers and kids to sit around and do nothing. I get letters from responsible gun owners who grieve with us every time these tragedies happen, who share my belief that the Second Amendment guarantees a right to bear arms, and who share my belief we can protect that right while keeping an irresponsible, dangerous few from inflicting harm on a massive scale.

So I know there are a bunch of us who care about this. If you are one of them, I need your help.

Change, as always, is going to take all of us. The gun lobby is loud and well organized in its defense of effortlessly available guns for anyone. The rest of us are going to have to be just as passionate and well organized in our defense of our kids. That's the work of citizenship: to stand up and fight for the change that we seek. I hope you'll join me in making America safer for all of our children.

Thanks, everybody.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:35 p.m. on December 17, 2015, in the

Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on January 1. In the address, the President referred to former Rep. Gabrielle D. Giffords. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting on Gun Violence
January 4, 2016

Well, happy New Year, everybody. Before the new year, I mentioned that I had given the charge to my Attorney General, FBI Director, Deputy Director at the ATF, and personnel in my White House to work together to see what more we could do to prevent the scourge of gun violence in this country.

I think everybody here is all too familiar with the statistics. We have tens of thousands of people every single year who are killed by guns. We have suicides that are committed by firearms at a rate that far exceeds other countries. We have a frequency of mass shootings that far exceeds other countries in frequency.

And although it is my strong belief that for us to get our complete arm around the problem Congress needs to act, what I asked my team to do is to see what more we could do to strengthen our enforcement and prevent guns from falling into the wrong hands, to make sure that criminals, people who are mentally unstable, those who could pose a danger to themselves or others are less likely to get a gun.

And I've just received back a report from Attorney General Lynch, Director Comey, as well as Deputy Director Brandon about some of the ideas and initiatives that they think can make a difference. And the good news is, is that these are not only recommendations that are well within my legal authority and the executive branch, but they're also ones that the overwhelming majority of the American people, including gun owners, support and believe in.

So, over the next several days, we'll be rolling out these initiatives. We'll be making sure that people have a very clear understanding of what can make a difference and what we can do. And although we have to be very clear that this is not going to solve every violent crime in this country, it's not going to prevent every mass shooting, it's not going to keep every gun out of the hands of a criminal, it will potentially save lives in this country and spare families the pain and the extraordinary loss that they've suffered as a consequence of a firearm being in the hands of the wrong people.

I'm also confident that the recommendations that are being made by my team here are ones that are entirely consistent with the Second Amendment and people's lawful right to bear arms. And we've been very careful recognizing that, although we have a strong tradition of gun ownership in this country, that even those who possess firearms for hunting, for self-protection, and for other legitimate reasons want to make sure that the wrong people don't have them for the wrong reasons.

So I want to say how much I appreciate the outstanding work that the team has done. Many of them worked over the holidays to get this set of recommendations to me. And I'm looking forward to speaking to the American people over the next several days in more detail about them. Okay?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:42 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas E. Brandon, Acting Director, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. The related memorandum on promoting smart-gun technology is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on Representative James A. McDermott's Decision Not To Seek Reelection
January 4, 2016

For more than 40 years, Jim McDermott has worked tirelessly on behalf of the people of Washington State. As a State legislator, he helped pass laws that offered healthcare to unemployed and low-income Washingtonians, the first such program in the Nation. In the United States Congress, he continued to be a much-needed voice for his most vulnerable constituents. Across America, you'll find families that are better off because Jim McDermott was fighting for them. I'm grateful for Jim's service, and Michelle and I wish him all the best in whatever the future holds.

Remarks on Gun Violence
January 5, 2016

The President. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Mark, I want to thank you for your introduction. I still remember the first time we met and the time we spent together and the conversation we had about Daniel. And that changed me that day. And my hope, earnestly, has been that it would change the country.

Five years ago this week, a sitting Member of Congress and 18 others were shot at, at a supermarket in Tucson, Arizona. It wasn't the first time I had to talk to the Nation in response to a mass shooting, nor would it be the last. Fort Hood. Binghamton. Aurora. Oak Creek. Newtown. The Navy Yard. Santa Barbara. Charleston. San Bernardino. Too many.

Audience member. Too many.

Audience member. Too many.

Audience member. Too many.

The President. Now, thanks to a great medical team and the love of her husband Mark, my dear friend and colleague, Gabby Giffords, survived. She's here with us today with her wonderful mom. Thanks to a great medical team, her wonderful husband Mark, who, by the way, the last time I met with Mark—this is just a small aside—you may know Mark's twin brother is in outer space. [*Laughter*] He came to the office, and I said, "How often are you talking to him?" And he says, "Well, I usually talk to him every day, but the call was coming in right before the meeting so I think I may have not answered his call"—[*laughter*]—which made me feel kind of bad. [*Laughter*] That's a long-distance call. [*Laughter*] So I told him if his brother Scott is calling today, that he should take it. [*Laughter*] Turn the ringer on. [*Laughter*]

I was there with Gabby when she was still in the hospital, and we didn't think necessarily at that point that she was going to survive. And that visit right before a memorial—about an hour later Gabby first opened her eyes. And I remember talking to mom about that. [*Laughter*] But I know the pain that she and her family have endured these past 5 years and the rehabilitation and the work and the effort to recover from shattering injuries.

And then, I think of all the Americans who aren't as fortunate. Every single year, more than 30,000 Americans have their lives cut short by guns—30,000. Suicides. Domestic violence. Gang shootouts. Accidents. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have lost brothers and sisters, or buried their own children. Many have had to learn to live with a disability or learned to live without the love of their life.

A number of those people are here today. They can tell you some stories. In this room right here, there are a lot of stories. There's a lot of heartache. There's a lot of resilience, there's a lot of strength, but there's also a lot of pain. And this is just a small sampling.

The United States of America is not the only country on Earth with violent or dangerous people. We are not inherently more prone to

violence. But we are the only advanced country on Earth that sees this kind of mass violence erupt with this kind of frequency. It doesn't happen in other advanced countries. It's not even close. And as I've said before, somehow, we become numb to it, and we start thinking that this is normal.

And instead of thinking about how to solve the problem, this has become one of our most polarized, partisan debates, despite the fact that there's a general consensus in America about what needs to be done. And that's part of the reason why, on Thursday, I'm going to hold a town hall meeting in Virginia on gun violence. Because my goal here is to bring good people on both sides of this issue together for an open discussion.

I'm not on the ballot again. I'm not looking to score some points. I think we can disagree without impugning other people's motives or without being disagreeable. We don't need to be talking past one another. But we do have to feel a sense of urgency about it. In Dr. King's words, we need to feel the "fierce urgency of now." Because people are dying. And the constant excuses for inaction no longer do, no longer suffice.

That's why we're here today. Not to debate the last mass shooting, but to do something to try to prevent the next one. To prove that the vast majority of Americans, even if our voices aren't always the loudest or most extreme, care enough about a little boy like Daniel to come together and take commonsense steps to save lives and protect more of our children.

Now, I want to be absolutely clear at the start—I've said this over and over again; this also becomes routine; there is a ritual about this whole thing that I have to do—I believe in the Second Amendment. And it's there written on the paper. It guarantees a right to bear arms. No matter how many times people try to twist my words around, I taught constitutional law, I know a little about this—[*applause*]—I get it. But I also believe that we can find ways to reduce gun violence consistent with the Second Amendment.

I mean, think about it. We all believe in the First Amendment, the guarantee of free speech, but we accept that you can't yell "fire" in a theater. We understand there are some constraints on our freedom in order to protect innocent people. We cherish our right to privacy, but we accept that you have to go through metal detectors before being allowed to board a plane. It's not because people like doing that, but we understand that that's part of the price of living in a civilized society.

And what's often ignored in this debate is that a majority of gun owners actually agree. A majority of gun owners agree that we can respect the Second Amendment while keeping an irresponsible, law-breaking few from inflicting harm on a massive scale.

Today, background checks are required at gun stores. If a father wants to teach his daughter how to hunt, he can walk into a gun store, get a background check, purchase his weapon safely and responsibly. This is not seen as an infringement on the Second Amendment. Contrary to the claims of what some gun rights proponents have suggested, this hasn't been the first step in some slippery slope to mass confiscation. Contrary to claims of some Presidential candidates, apparently, before this meeting—[*laughter*]—this is not a plot to take away everybody's guns. You pass a background check, you purchase a firearm.

The problem is, some gun sellers have been operating under a different set of rules. A violent felon can buy the exact same weapon over the Internet with no background check, no questions asked. A recent study found that about 1 in 30 people looking to buy guns on one website had criminal records. One out of 30 had a criminal record. We're talking about individuals convicted of serious crimes: aggravated assault, domestic violence, robbery, illegal gun possession. People with lengthy criminal histories buying deadly weapons all too easily. And this was just one website within the span of a few months.

So we've created a system in which dangerous people are allowed to play by a different set of rules than a responsible gun owner who buys his or her gun the right way and subjects themselves to a background check. That doesn't make sense. Everybody should have to

abide by the same rules. Most Americans and gun owners agree. And that's what we tried to change 3 years ago, after 26 Americans—including 20 children—were murdered at Sandy Hook Elementary.

Two United States Senators, Joe Manchin, a Democrat from West Virginia, and Pat Toomey, a Republican from Pennsylvania, both gun owners, both strong defenders of our Second Amendment rights, both with "A" grades from the NRA—that's hard to get—worked together in good faith, consulting with folks like our Vice President, who has been a champion on this for a long time, to write a commonsense, compromise bill that would have required virtually everyone who buys a gun to get a background check. That was it. Pretty commonsense stuff. Ninety percent of Americans supported that idea. Ninety percent of Democrats in the Senate voted for that idea. But it failed because 90 percent of Republicans in the Senate voted against that idea.

How did this become such a partisan issue? Republican President George W. Bush once said, "I believe in background checks at gun shows or anywhere to make sure that guns don't get into the hands of people that shouldn't have them." Senator John McCain introduced a bipartisan measure to address the gun show loophole, saying, "We need this amendment because criminals and terrorists have exploited and are exploiting this very obvious loophole in our gun safety laws." Even the NRA used to support expanded background checks. [*Laughter*] And by the way, most of its members still do. Most Republican voters still do.

How did we get here? How did we get to the place where people think requiring a comprehensive background check means taking away people's guns?

Each time this comes up, we are fed the excuse that commonsense reforms like background checks might not have stopped the last massacre or the one before that or the one before that, so why bother trying. I reject that thinking. We know we can't stop every act of violence, every act of evil in the world. But maybe we could try to stop one act of evil, one act of violence.

Some of you may recall, at the same time that Sandy Hook happened, a disturbed person in China took a knife and tried to kill—with a knife—a bunch of children in China. But most of them survived because he didn't have access to a powerful weapon. We maybe can't save everybody, but we could save some. Just as we don't prevent all traffic accidents, but we take steps to try to reduce traffic accidents.

As Ronald Reagan once said, if mandatory background checks could save more lives, "it would be well worth making it the law of the land." The bill before Congress 3 years ago met that test. Unfortunately, too many Senators failed theirs.

In fact, we know that background checks make a difference. After Connecticut passed a law requiring background checks and gun safety courses, gun deaths decreased by 40 percent—40 percent. Meanwhile, since Missouri repealed a law requiring comprehensive background checks and purchase permits, gun deaths have increased to almost 50-percent higher than the national average. One study found, unsurprisingly, that criminals in Missouri now have easier access to guns.

And the evidence tells us that in States that require background checks, law-abiding Americans don't find it any harder to purchase guns whatsoever. Their guns have not been confiscated. Their rights have not been infringed.

And that's just the information we have access to. With more research, we could further improve gun safety, just as with more research, we've reduced traffic fatalities enormously over the last 30 years. We do research when cars, food, medicine, even toys harm people so that we make them safer. And you know what? Research, science, those are good things. They work. [*Laughter*] They do.

But think about this. When it comes to an inherently deadly weapon—nobody argues that guns are potentially deadly—weapons that kill tens of thousands of Americans every year, Congress actually voted to make it harder for public health experts to conduct research into gun violence, made it harder to collect data

and facts and develop strategies to reduce gun violence. Even after San Bernardino, they've refused to make it harder for terror suspects who can't get on a plane to buy semiautomatic weapons. That's not right. [*Laughter*] That can't be right.

So the gun lobby may be holding Congress hostage right now, but they cannot hold America hostage. We do not have to accept this carnage as the price of freedom.

Now, I want to be clear. Congress still needs to act. The folks in this room will not rest until Congress does. Because once Congress gets on board with commonsense gun safety measures, we can reduce gun violence a whole lot more. But we also can't wait. Until we have a Congress that's in line with the majority of Americans, there are actions within my legal authority that we can take to help reduce gun violence and save more lives, actions that protect our rights and our kids.

After Sandy Hook, Joe and I worked together with our teams, and we put forward a whole series of executive actions to try to tighten up the existing rules and systems that we had in place. But today we want to take it a step further. So let me outline what we're going to be doing.

Number one, anybody in the business of selling firearms must get a license and conduct background checks or be subject to criminal prosecutions. It doesn't matter whether you're doing it over the Internet or at a gun show. It's not where you do it, but what you do.

We're also expanding background checks to cover violent criminals who try to buy some of the most dangerous firearms by hiding behind trusts and corporations and various cutouts.

We're also taking steps to make the background check system more efficient. Under the guidance of Jim Comey and the FBI and our Deputy Director Tom Brandon at AFATF, we're going to hire more folks to process applications faster, and we're going to bring an outdated background check system into the 21st century.

And these steps will actually lead to a smoother process for law-abiding gun owners, a smoother process for responsible gun dealers, a stronger process for protecting the people from—the public from dangerous people. So that's number one.

Number two, we're going to do everything we can to ensure the smart and effective enforcement of gun safety laws that are already on the books, which means we're going to add 200 more ATF agents and investigators. We're going to require firearms dealers to report more or lost—more lost or stolen guns on a timely basis. We're working with advocates to protect victims of domestic abuse from gun violence, where too often, people are not getting the protection that they need.

Number three, we're going to do more to help those suffering from mental illness get the help that they need. So high-profile mass shootings tend to shine a light on those few mentally unstable people who inflict harm on others. But the truth is, is that nearly two in three gun deaths are from suicides. So a lot of our work is to prevent people from hurting themselves.

That's why we made sure that the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare—[*laughter*]—finally, under—that law made sure that treatment for mental health was covered the same as treatment for any other illness. And that's why we're going to invest $500 million to expand access to treatment across the country.

It's also why we're going to ensure that Federal mental health records are submitted to the background check system and remove barriers that prevent States from reporting relevant information. If we can continue to destigmatize mental health issues, get folks proper care, and fill gaps in the background check system, then we can spare more families the pain of losing a loved one to suicide.

And for those in Congress who so often rush to blame mental illness for mass shootings as a way of avoiding action on guns, here's your chance to support these efforts. Put your money where your mouth is.

Number four, we're going to boost gun safety technology. Today, many gun injuries and deaths are the result of legal guns that were stolen or misused or discharged accidentally.

In 2013 alone, more than 500 people lost their lives to gun accidents, and that includes 30 children younger than 5 years old. Now, in the greatest, most technologically advanced nation on Earth, there is no reason for this. We need to develop new technologies that make guns safer. If we can set it up so you can't unlock your phone unless you've got the right fingerprint, why can't we do the same thing for our guns? If there's an app that can help us find a missing tablet—which happens to me often the older I get—[*laughter*]—if we can do it for your iPad, there's no reason we can't do it with a stolen gun. If a child can't open a bottle of aspirin, we should make sure that they can't pull a trigger on a gun. Right? So we're going to advance research. We're going to work with the private sector to update firearms technology.

And some gun retailers are already stepping up by refusing to finalize a purchase without a complete background check or by refraining from selling semiautomatic weapons or high-capacity magazines. And I hope that more retailers and more manufacturers join them, because they should care as much as anybody about a product that now kills almost as many Americans as car accidents.

I make this point because none of us can do this alone. I think Mark made that point earlier. All of us should be able to work together to find a balance that declares the rest of our rights are also important. Second Amendment rights are important, but there are other rights that we care about as well. And we have to be able to balance them. Because our right to worship freely and safely, that right was denied to Christians in Charleston, South Carolina. And that was denied Jews in Kansas City. And that was denied Muslims in Chapel Hill and Sikhs in Oak Creek. They had rights too.

Our right to peaceful assembly, that right was robbed from moviegoers in Aurora and Lafayette. Our unalienable right to life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness, those rights were stripped from college students in Blacksburg and Santa Barbara and from high schoolers at Columbine and from first-graders in Newtown. First-graders. And from every family who never imagined that their loved one would be taken from our lives by a bullet from a gun.

Every time I think about those kids, it gets me mad. And by the way, it happens on the streets of Chicago every day.

So all of us need to demand a Congress brave enough to stand up to the gun lobby's lies. All of us need to stand up and protect its citizens. All of us need to demand Governors and legislatures and businesses do their part to make our communities safer. We need the wide majority of responsible gun owners who grieve with us every time this happens and feel like your views are not being properly represented to join with us to demand something better. And we need voters who want safer gun laws, and who are disappointed in leaders who stand in their way, to remember come election time.

I mean, some of this is just simple math. Yes, the gun lobby is loud and it is organized in defense of making it effortless for guns to be available for anybody, any time. Well, you know what, the rest of us, you—we all have to be just as passionate. We have to be just as organized in defense of our kids. This is not that complicated. The reason Congress blocks laws is because they want to win elections. And if you make it hard for them to win an election if they block those laws, they'll change course, I promise you.

And yes, it will be hard, and it won't happen overnight. It won't happen during this Congress. It won't happen during my Presidency. But a lot of things don't happen overnight. A woman's right to vote didn't happen overnight. The liberation of African Americans didn't happen overnight. LGBT rights, that was decades' worth of work. So just because it's hard, that's no excuse not to try.

And if you ever have any doubt as to why you should feel that "fierce urgency of now," think about what happened 3 weeks ago. Zaevion Dobson was a sophomore at Fulton High School in Knoxville, Tennessee. He played football; beloved by his classmates and his teachers. His own mayor called him one of their city's success stories. The week before Christmas, he headed to a friend's house to

play video games. He wasn't in the wrong place at the wrong time. He hadn't made a bad decision. He was exactly where any other kid would be. Your kid. My kids. And then, gunmen started firing. And Zaevion—who was in high school, hadn't even gotten started in life—dove on top of three girls to shield them from the bullets. And he was shot in the head. And the girls were spared. And he gave his life to save theirs, an act of heroism a lot bigger than anything we should ever expect from a 15-year-old. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

We are not asked to do what Zaevion Dobson did. We're not asked to have shoulders that big, a heart that strong, reactions that quick. I'm not asking people to have that same level of courage or sacrifice or love. But if we love our kids and care about their prospects, and if we love this country and care about its future, then we can find the courage to vote. We can find the courage to get mobilized and organized. We can find the courage to cut through all the noise and do what a sensible country would do.

That's what we're doing today. And tomorrow, we should do more. And we should do more the day after that. And if we do, we'll leave behind a nation that's stronger than the one we inherited and worthy of the sacrifice of a young man like Zaevion.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:43 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mark Barden, founder and managing director, Sandy Hook Promise, and father of Daniel Barden, who was killed in the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, on December 14, 2012; Mark E. Kelly, husband, and Gloria F. Giffords, mother, of former Rep. Gabrielle D. Giffords; Cmdr. Scott J. Kelly, crewmember, International Space Station; Min Yingjun, who was arrested for stabbing 22 children outside their school in the village of Chengping in Henan Province, China, on December 14, 2012; Mayor Madeline Rogero of Knoxville, TN; Brandon Perry and Christopher D. Bassett, suspected gunmen in the shooting in Knoxville on December 17, 2015; and Faith Gordon and Kiara Rucker, Fulton High School students who were shielded by Zaevion Dobson in the Knoxville shooting.

Statement on Representative Steven J. Israel's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

January 5, 2016

Steve Israel has spent more than two decades serving the people of Long Island and fighting for working families. During his eight terms in Congress, he has fought to expand economic opportunity, deliver on America's promise of equality, honor our commitments to our veterans, and protect our communities from gun violence. As a leader of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, Steve fought to advance our shared values and to build a future where every American who works hard can get ahead. I'm grateful for Steve's service, and I look forward to working with him throughout the remainder of his term. Michelle and I wish Steve and his family well as they begin their newest chapter.

Statement on the Observance of Orthodox Christmas

January 7, 2016

Michelle and I wish a blessed Christmas to Orthodox Christians in the United States and around the world. During this holy season, we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and pray for peace on Earth. This day gives us a special opportunity to commemorate the contributions

of American Orthodox leaders to our progress. It also gives us a chance to reaffirm our commitment to protect religious minorities, including Christian minorities, who too often face violence and persecution throughout the world. Today and every day, we stand with all those who suffer attacks and discrimination, because we believe that the freedom to practice your religion as you choose is a birthright of every person and part of the bedrock of a just society. So we join with our Orthodox brothers and sisters in celebration and in hopeful prayer for peace and justice the world over.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at CNN's "Guns in America" Town Hall Meeting in Fairfax, Virginia
January 7, 2016

CNN Anchor Anderson Cooper. And good evening from George Mason University here in Fairfax, Virginia. We are here tonight to talk about one of the most divisive issues in America today: guns. Their protection is enshrined in the Constitution in the Second Amendment, and gun ownership is an integral part of American history and culture.

There are some 30,000 gun deaths in America each year. Two-thirds of them are suicides; one-third of them are homicides. So the question we want to confront tonight is, how you find a balance between protecting the rights of American citizens who want to own guns, but preventing guns from getting into the hands of people who shouldn't have them?

We brought together people here tonight who represent really all sides of the issue: gun owners, gun sellers, people who have survived shootings or lost loved ones. Some here believe that having more guns makes us all safer and believe the right to bear arms defines us, preserves us from tyranny, and cannot be compromised in any way. Others here tonight believe just as passionately that more needs to be done to limit the sale of firearms. And we respect all of their views, and we want to hear from as many as we can tonight in the hour ahead.

One voice you will not hear from tonight is the National Rifle Association. They're the Nation's largest, most influential and powerful gun rights group. We invited them to be here; they are—I think their office is just a couple miles away. They declined to take part. Some of their members are here tonight though. We're very thankful for that. And so are representatives from the National Firearms Retailers Association.

This town hall is not something the White House dreamed up or that the White House organized. CNN approached the White House shortly after the San Bernardino terror attacks with this idea. And we're pleased that they agreed to participate and pleased to welcome tonight the President of the United States, Barack Obama.

The President. Hey. Please take your seat.

Mr. Cooper. Thank you, Mr. President. Welcome.

The President. Thank you, everybody.

Mr. Cooper. Thanks for being here. I appreciate it.

The President. Great to be here. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Great to see you.

The President's Experience With Guns

Mr. Cooper. Good to see you. Let me start. Have you ever owned a gun?

The President. I have never owned a gun. Now, up at Camp David, we've got some skeet shooting, so on a fairly regular basis, we get a 12-gauge and—I'm not making any claims about my marksmanship. [*Laughter*] But——

Mr. Cooper. Before you were President, did you ever feel a desire to get a gun, feel the need to get a gun?

The President. I grew up mostly in Hawaii, and other than hunting for wild pig, which they do once in a while, there's not the popularity of hunting and sportsmanship with guns as much as there are in other parts of the country.

Gun Sales/Gun Violence/Gun Ownership

Mr. Cooper. Right. I mean, I ask the question because there's a lot of people out there who don't trust you, obviously, on the issue of guns. You keep saying you don't want to take away everybody's guns. But there's a lot of people out there tonight watching who don't believe you. There are a lot of people in this room who, frankly, don't believe you. And it's not just that you don't really have personal experience having owned a gun, but it's that things you've said: support for Australia's tough antigun policies. They banned semiautomatic assault rifles. They banned even shotguns in Australia.

The President. Right.

Mr. Cooper. You've praised their policies over and over.

Back in 2008, you said—you talked about bitter Americans clinging to their guns. Even now, these executive actions have caused a lot of concern among a lot of people. What can you say to somebody tonight to convince them that you don't want to take away everybody's guns, that you're not coming for their guns?

The President. Well, first of all, Anderson, I think it's useful to keep in mind, I've been now President for over 7 years, and gun sales don't seem to have suffered during that time.

Mr. Cooper. If anything, actually, you've helped.

The President. They've gone up. I've been very good for gun manufacturers. [*Laughter*] More importantly, let me—I'll tell you a story that I think indicates how I see the issue.

Back in 2007, 2008, when I was campaigning, I'd leave Chicago, a city which is wonderful—I couldn't be prouder of my city—but where every week, there's a story about a young person getting shot. Some are gang members, and it's turf battles. Sometimes, it's innocent victims.

Mr. Cooper. Fifty-five people have been shot in Chicago in the last 7 days.

The President. Sometimes, it's happened just a few blocks from my house, and I live in a reasonably good neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago.

So that's one image, all right: talking to families who've gone through the pain of losing somebody because of violence in Chicago, gun violence.

Michelle and I are then campaigning out in Iowa, and we're going to farms, and we're going to counties. And at one point, Michelle turned to me, and she said, you know, if I was living in a farmhouse, where the sheriff's department is pretty far away, and somebody can just turn off the highway and come up to the farm, I'd want to have a shotgun or a rifle to make sure that I was protected and my family was protected. And she was absolutely right.

And so part of the reason, I think, that this ends up being such a difficult issue is because people occupy different realities. There are a whole bunch of law-abiding citizens who have grown up hunting with their dad or going to the shooting range and are responsible gun owners. And then, there's the reality that there are neighborhoods around the country where it is easier for a 12- or 13-year-old to purchase a gun—and cheaper—than it is for them to get a book.

Gun Violence Prevention Efforts/Background Check System

Mr. Cooper. But what you're proposing, what you proposed this week, the executive actions, the other things, are they really going to be effective? And I ask this because the vast majority of felons out there—I mean, we can all agree criminals should not get guns; we want to keep guns out of the hands of criminals.

The President. Right.

Mr. Cooper. The vast majority of criminals get their guns from—either illegally or from family or friends. So background checks is not something that's going to affect them, is it?

The President. Well, but that's not exactly accurate. Look, first of all, it's important for everybody to understand what I've proposed and what I haven't proposed. What I've said consistently throughout my Presidency is, I respect the Second Amendment. I respect the right to bear arms. I respect people who want a gun for self-protection, for hunting, for sportsmanship.

But all of us can agree that it makes sense to do everything we can to keep guns out of the hands of people who would try to do others harm or to do themselves harm.

Because every year, we're losing 30,000 people to gun violence. Two-thirds of those are actually suicides. Hundreds of kids under the age of 18 are being shot or shooting themselves, often by accident, many of them under the age of 5. And so if we can combine gun safety with sensible background checks and some other steps, we're not going to eliminate gun violence, but we will lessen it. And if we take that number from 30,000 down to, let's say, 28,000, that's 2,000 families who don't have to go through what the families at Newtown or San Bernardino or Charleston went through.

And so what we've proposed is that if you have a background check system that has a bunch of big loopholes, which is why a lot of criminals and people who shouldn't have guns are able to get guns——

Q. But they're not buying them at gun shows. Only 1 percent of criminals are buying them at gun shows.

The President. No, but this is what happens. Let's go back to the city of Chicago that has strong gun control laws. And oftentimes, the NRA will point to that as an example and say, see, these things don't work. Well, the problem is, is that about 30, 40 percent of those guns are coming from Indiana, across the border, where there are much laxer laws. And so folks will go to a gun show and purchase a whole bunch of firearms, put them in a van, drive up into Mike Pfleger's neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago, where his parish is, open up the trunk, and those things are for sale.

Now, technically, you could say those folks bought them illegally, but it was facilitated by the fact that what used to be a small exception that said collectors and hobbyists don't need to go through a background check has become this massive industry where people who are doing business are, in fact, saying that they're not in the business of selling guns, but are.

And all we're saying here is, is that we want to put everybody on notice that the definition of doing business—which means you have to register, and it means you have to run a background check—is if you are making a profit and repeatedly selling guns, then you should have to follow the same rules as every other gun dealer. And what that means——

Background Check System/National Rifle Association/Consumer Product Safety Regulations

Mr. Cooper. But there are a lot of people who believe that's not specific enough, because there's a lot of fathers and sons who sell guns every now and then and at gun shows. Are they going to have to now start doing background checks? Are they going to start to have to register?

The President. Look, what the Justice Department has done is provided a whole range of very specific examples. And what we ultimately need, I believe, is for Congress to set up a system that is efficient, that doesn't inconvenience the lawful gun seller or purchaser, but that makes sure that we're doing the best background check possible.

And the fact, Anderson, that the system may not catch every single person or there may be a circumstance where somebody doesn't think that they have to register and do and that may cause some redtape and bureaucracy for them, which—or inconvenience—has to be weighed against the fact that we may be able to save a whole bunch of families from the grief that some of the people in this audience have had to go through.

And keep in mind, for the gun owners who are in attendance here, my suspicion is, is that you all had to go through a background check, and it didn't prevent you from getting a weapon. And the notion that you should have to do that, but there are a whole bunch of folks who are less responsible than you who don't have to do it, doesn't make much sense.

So why we should resist this—keep in mind that, historically, the NRA was in favor of background checks. Historically, many in the Republican Party were in favor of background checks. And what's changed is not that my proposals are particularly radical. What's changed is, we've suddenly created an atmosphere in which I put out a proposal like background

checks, or, after Sandy Hook, we're calling on Congress, along with people like Gabby Giffords, who herself was a victim of gun violence—we put out a proposal that is common sense, modest, does not claim to solve every problem, is respectful of the Second Amendment, and the way it is described is that we're trying to take away everybody's guns.

And part of the reason I welcomed this opportunity by CNN to have a good discussion and debate about it is because our position is consistently mischaracterized. And by the way, there's a reason why the NRA is not here. They're just down the street, and since this is the main reason they exist, you'd think that they'd be prepared to have a debate with the President.

Mr. Cooper. Would you be willing to meet with them? They haven't been to the White House for 3 years. They have—[*inaudible*]—about it.

The President. Oh, no, no, we've invited them. We've invited them.

Mr. Cooper. So right now, tonight you're saying you would be welcome to meet with them?

The President. We have invited them repeatedly. But if you listen to the rhetoric, it is so over the top and so overheated and, most importantly, is not acknowledging the fact that there's no other consumer item that we purchase——

Q. So is that an open invitation that——

The President. Hold on a second. Let me finish this point, Cooper. There's nothing else in our lives that we purchase where we don't try to make it a little safer if we can.

Audience members. That's right.

The President. Traffic fatalities have gone down drastically during my lifetime. And part of it is technology, and part of it is that the National Highway Safety Administration does research and they figure out, you know what, seatbelts really work. And then, we passed some laws to make sure seatbelts are fastened. Airbags make a lot of sense; let's try those out. Toys—we say, you know what, we find out that kids are swallowing toys all the time, let's make sure that the toys aren't so small that they swallow them if they're for toddlers or infants. Medicine—kids can't open aspirin caps.

Now, the notion that we would not apply the same basic principles to gun ownership as we do to everything else that we own——

Mr. Cooper. But you don't——

The President. ——just to try to make them safer, or the notion that anything we do to try to make them safer is somehow a plot to take away guns, that contradicts what we do to try to create a better life for Americans in every other area of our lives.

National Rifle Association/Gun Confiscation Fears/Gun Sales

Mr. Cooper. So just so I'm clear, tonight you're saying you would welcome to meet with the NRA?

The President. I'm happy—Anderson, I've said this repeatedly. I'm happy to meet with them. I'm happy to talk to them. But the conversation has to be based on facts and truth and what we're actually proposing, not some imaginary fiction in which Obama is trying to take away your guns.

Mr. Cooper. Well, let's talk about what you're proposing.

The President. The reason, by the way, that the gun manufacturers—that gun sales spike not just before I propose something—every time there is a mass shooting, gun sales spike. And part of the reason is, is that the NRA has convinced many of its members that somebody is going come grab your guns, which is, by the way, really profitable for the gun manufacturers. It's a great advertising mechanism, but it's not necessary. There's enough of a market out there for people who want protection, who are sportsmen, who want to go hunting with their kids. And we can make it safer.

Mr. Cooper. I want to open this up to people in our audience.

The President. Absolutely.

Mr. Cooper. A lot of people have traveled far. I want you to meet Taya Kyle. She's the widow of Chris Kyle, former Navy SEAL, author of "American Sniper." Taya wrote a book, "American Wife: A Memoir of Love, War, Faith, and Renewal."

Taya, we're happy you're here. What do you want to ask the President?

Crime Rates/Gun Ownership Rates/Background Check System

Q. I appreciate you taking the time to come here. And I think that your message of hope is something I agree with, and I think it's great. And I think that by creating new laws, you do give people hope. The thing is that the laws that we create don't stop these horrific things from happening, right? And that's a very tough pill to swallow.

The President. Right.

Q. We want to think that we can make a law and people will follow it. But by the very nature of their crime, they're not following it. By the very nature of looking at the people who hurt our loved ones here, I don't know that any of them would have been stopped by the background check. And yet I crave that desire for hope too. And so I think, part of it, we have to recognize that we cannot outlaw murder, because the people who are murdering, right, are—they're breaking the law, but they also don't have a moral code that we have. And so they could do the same amount of damage with a pipe bomb. The problem is that they want to murder.

And I'm wondering why it wouldn't be a better use of our time to give people hope in a different way, to say, you know what, we—well, first of all, actually, let me back up to that. Because with the laws, I know that at least the last I heard, the Federal prosecution of gun crimes was, like, 40 percent. And what I mean by that is that there are people lying on these forms already, and we're not prosecuting them. So there's an issue there, right? But instead, if we can give people hope and say that also during this time, while you've been President, we are at the lowest murder rate in our country—alltime low of murders.

Mr. President. Right.

Q. We're at an alltime high of gun ownership, right? I'm not necessarily saying that the two are correlated, but what I'm saying is that, we're at an alltime low for a murder rate. That's a big deal.

And yet I think most of us in this country feel like it could happen at any moment. It could happen to any of us at any time, at a moment's notice. And I'm almost finished. Just, when you talk about the NRA, and after a mass shooting that gun sales go up, I would argue that it's not necessarily that I think somebody is going to come take my gun from me, but I want the hope, and the hope that I have the right to protect myself, that I don't end up to be one of these families; that I have the freedom to carry whatever weapon I feel I need, just like your wife said on that farm road. The sheriffs are not going to get to my house either. And I understand that background checks aren't necessarily going to stop me from getting a gun, but I also know that they wouldn't have stopped any of the people here in this room from killing. And so it seems like almost a false sense of hope.

So why not celebrate where we are? I guess that's my real question is——

The President. Well, first——

Q. ——celebrate that we're good people, and 99.9 percent of us are never going to kill anyone.

The President. Well, let me make a couple of points. First of all, thanks to your husband for his service, and thank you for your service, because of extraordinary heroism that he and your family have shown in protecting all of us. And I'm very grateful for that.

Number two, what you said about murder rates and violent crime generally is something that we don't celebrate enough. The fact of the matter is, is that violent crime has been steadily declining across America for a pretty long time. And you wouldn't always know it by watching television, but overall, most cities are much safer than they were 10 years ago or 20 years ago.

Now, I'd challenge the notion that the reason for that is because there's more gun ownership, because if you look at where are the areas with the highest gun ownership, those are the places, in some cases, where the crime rate hasn't dropped down that much. And the places where there's pretty stiff restrictions on gun ownership, in some of those places, the crime

has dropped really quickly. So I'm not sure that there's a one-to-one correlation there.

But I think the most important point I want to make is that you will be able to purchase a firearm. Some criminals will get their hands on firearms even if there's a background check. Somebody may lie on a form. Somebody will intend to commit a crime, but they don't have a record that shows up on the background check system.

But in the same way that we don't eliminate all traffic accidents, but over the course of 20 years, traffic accidents get lower—there's still tragedies, there's still drunk drivers, there's still people who don't wear their seatbelts—but over time, that violence was reduced, and so families are spared. That's the same thing that we can do with gun ownership.

There is a way for us to set up a system where you, a responsible gun owner, who—I'm assuming, given your husband and your family—is a much better marksman than I am, can have a firearm to protect yourself, but where it is much harder for somebody to fill up a car with guns and sell them to 13-year-old kids on the streets. And that is, I think, what we're trying to do.

What we're also trying to do is make the database more effective. So that's part of the proposal, which, by the way, will convenience you when you go to the store, because if we can set up a 24/7 background check system, then that means that it's less likely that things slip through the cracks or it's more difficult for you to get your background check completed.

And we're also trying to close a loophole that has been developing over the last decade, where now people are using cut-out trusts and shell corporations to purchase the most dangerous weapons—sawed-off shotguns, automatic weapons, silencers—and don't have to go through background checks at all. And we don't know whether—are these sales going to drug traffickers? Are they—we don't know who's purchasing them right now. And so what we're saying is, you know what, that is something that we've got to do something about.

The same thing is true with Internet sales, where one study has shown that 1 out of 30 persons who are purchasing weapons over the Internet turn out to have a felony record. And that's not something you want to see.

Mr. Cooper. I think one question a lot of people have about you is, do you believe the fundamental notion that a good guy with a gun or a good woman with a gun is an important bulwark against a bad person with a gun? And before you answer, I want you to meet Kimberly Corban. Kimberly was a college student in Colorado in 2006. Kimberly is right over there. She was raped by a man who broke into her apartment. She testified for 3 hours in the trial against him. Her attacker was sentenced to 24-years-to-life in prison. And I know that attack, Kimberly, changed your view of handguns. What's your question for the President?

Concealed-Carry Laws/Gun Ownership for Self-Defense/Background Check System

Q. Absolutely. As a survivor of rape and now a mother to two small children, it seems like being able to purchase a firearm of my choosing and being able to carry that wherever my—me and my family are, it seems like my basic responsibility as a parent at this point. I have been unspeakably victimized once already, and I refuse to let that happen again to myself or my kids. So why can't your administration see that these restrictions that you're putting to make it harder for me to own a gun or harder for me to take that where I need to be is actually just making my kids and I less safe?

The President. Well, Kimberly, first of all, obviously, your story is horrific. The strength you've shown in telling your story and being here tonight is remarkable. And so I'm really proud of you for that.

I just want to repeat that there's nothing that we've proposed that would make it harder for you to purchase a firearm. And now, you may be referring to issues like concealed carry, but those tend to be State-by-State decisions, and we're not making any proposals with respect to what States are doing. They can make their own decisions there. So there really is no—nothing that we're proposing that prevents you or makes it harder for you to purchase a firearm if you need one.

There are always questions as to whether or not having a firearm in the home protects you from that kind of violence. And I'm not sure we can resolve that. People argue it both sides. What is true is, is that you have to be pretty well trained in order to fire a weapon against somebody who is assaulting you and catches you by surprise. And what is also true is, there's always the possibility that that firearm in a home leads to a tragic accident. We can debate that, round or flat.

But for now, what I just want to focus on is that you certainly would like to make it a little harder for that assailant to have also had a gun. You certainly would want to make sure that if he gets released, that he now can't do what he did to you to somebody else. And it's going to be easier for us to prevent him from getting a gun if there's a strong background system in place—background check system in place.

And so if you look at the statistics, there's no doubt that there are times where somebody who has a weapon has been able to protect themselves and scare off an intruder or an assailant. But what is more often the case is that they may not have been able to protect themselves, but they're—end up being the victim of the weapon that they purchased themselves. And that's something that can be debated. In the meantime, all I'm focused on is making sure that a terrible crime like yours that was committed is not made easier because somebody can go on the Internet and just buy whatever weapon they want without us finding out whether they're a criminal or not.

Mr. Cooper. Kimberly, thank you for being here. I appreciate it.

You talked about Chicago, and there's a lot of folks from Chicago here tonight. I want you to meet—or I want everybody to meet, because I know you've met her before, Cleo Pendleton. She's sitting over there. And I should point out—I think I said it earlier—55 shootings in Chicago in just the past 7 days. Cleo Pendleton, her daughter, Hadiya, performed at your second Inauguration. She was shot to death a little more than a week later. She was 15 years old. She was an honor student, a majorette. And you being here tonight honors her, so thank you very much for being here. What's your question to the President?

Background Check System/Concealed-Carry Laws

Q. Well, I want to say thank you, first of all, for making it more difficult for guns to get in the hands of those that shouldn't have them. Thank you for the action you took on Tuesday. But I want to ask a question: How can we stop the trafficking of guns from States with looser gun laws into States with tougher gun laws? Because I believe that's the case often in Chicago and possibly the source of the gun that shot and murdered my daughter.

The President. Well, first of all, it's great to see you again. And part of the reason that we do this is because when you meet parents of wonderful young people and they tell their stories, at least for me, I think of Malia and I think of Sasha and I think of my nieces and I think of my nephews. And the pain that any of us go through with a loss like that is extraordinary. And I couldn't be prouder of the families who are here representing both sides, but who've been affected in those ways.

If we are able to set up a strong background check system—and my proposal, by the way, includes hiring—having the FBI hire a couple hundred more people to help process background checks, because they're big numbers, you're talking about 20 million checks that are getting done every year—hiring 200,000—or 200 more ATF agents to be able to go after unscrupulous gun dealers, then that will apply across the country.

And so even—some States may have laws that allow for conceal-and-carry; some States may not. There's still going to be differences. But what will at least be consistent across the country is that it's a little bit harder to get a gun.

Now, we can't guarantee that criminals are not going to have ways of getting guns. But, for example, it may be a little more difficult and a little more expensive, and the laws of supply and demand mean that if something is harder to get, and it's a little more expensive to get, then fewer people get them. And that, in and of itself, could make a difference.

So if somebody is a straw purchaser—and what that means is, they don't intend the guns for themselves, they intend to resell them to somebody else—they go to a gun show in Indiana, where right now they don't have to do a background check, load up a van, and open up that van and sell them to kids and gangs in Chicago—if now that person has to go through a background check, they've got to register, ATF has the capacity then to find out if and when a gun is used in a crime in Chicago where that gun had come from. And now you know, all right, here's somebody who seems to be willing to sell a gun to a 15-year-old who had a known record.

Mr. Cooper. But you're only going to be asking people to get a license and do background checks if they give out business cards, if they're selling weapons that are in the original packaging. Somebody just walking around a gun show selling a weapon is not necessarily going to have to register.

The President. No, the—look, there's going to be a case-by-case evaluation: Are they on an ongoing basis making a profit, and are they repeatedly selling firearms?

Mr. Cooper. Okay. I want you to meet Sheriff Paul Babeu of Pinal County, Arizona.

The President. Good to see you.

Mr. Cooper. He's a Republican running for Congress. After the recent terror attacks, Sheriff, I know you've been telling citizens to arm themselves to protect their families. What's your question to the President?

Q. Well, first, deputies' slow response time has been mentioned a couple times. I want to be clear that my deputies have a very fast emergency response.

The President. [*Laughter*] I'm sure that's true.

Gun Violence Prevention Efforts/Crime Prevention Efforts

Q. Yes. Mr. President, you've said you've been thwarted by—frustrated by Congress. As a sheriff, I oftentimes get frustrated. But I don't make the laws, and I've sworn an oath to enforce the law, to uphold the Constitution, the same oath you've taken. And the talk and why we're here is all these mass shootings, and yet you've said in your executive action, it wouldn't have solved even one of these or the terrorist attack——

The President. No, I didn't say that. I didn't say that it wouldn't solve one.

Q. Well, looking at the information, what would it have solved? Now, knowing——

Mr. Cooper. None of the recent mass shootings, I should point out, none of the guns were purchased from an unlicensed dealer.

Q. Correct. And that's what I'm speaking to, the executive action that you mentioned earlier. Aspirin, toys, or cars, they're not written about in the Constitution. I want to know—and I think all of us really want to get to the solution, and you said don't talk past each other—what would you have done to prevent these mass shootings and the terrorist attack? And how do we get those with mental illness and criminals—that's the real problem here—how are we going to get them to follow the laws?

The President. Well, first of all, appreciate your service. Good luck on your race. You sure you want to go to Congress?

Q. I don't want your endorsement. [*Laughter*]

The President. I'm sure that's true. That will hurt you. And I'm sure it's a Republican district. [*Laughter*]

The—look, crime is always going to be with us. So I think it's really important for us not to suggest that if we can't solve every crime, we shouldn't try to solve any crimes.

And the problem when we talk about that "guns don't shoot—kill people, people kill people," or it's primarily a mental health problem, or it's a criminal and evil problem, and that's what we have to get at—all of us are interested in fighting crime. I'm very proud of the fact that violent crime rates have continued to go down during the course of my Presidency. I've got an Attorney General, an FBI that works very closely with local law enforcement in busting up crime rings all the time. That's a huge priority to us. And we're probably providing grants to your department to help go after criminals.

The challenge we have is that in many instances, you don't know ahead of time who's going to be the criminal. It's not as if criminals walk around with a label saying, "I'm a criminal." And by the way, the young man who killed those kids in Newtown, he didn't have a criminal record, and so we didn't know ahead of time, necessarily, that he was going to do something like that. But he was able to have access to an arsenal that allowed him, in very short order, to kill an entire classroom of small children. And so the question then becomes, are there ways for us—since we can't identify that person all the time—are there ways for us to make it less lethal when something like that happens?

And I mentioned this during my speech at the White House a couple of days ago. Right around the time of Newtown, in China, a guy who was obviously similarly deranged had a knife and started attacking a bunch of schoolchildren. About the same number were cut or stabbed by this guy. But most of them survived. And the reason was because he wasn't wielding a semiautomatic.

So the main point I think that I want to make here is that everybody here is in favor of going after criminals, locking them up, making sure that we're creating an environment where kids don't turn into criminals and providing the support that they need. Those are all important things. Nobody is saying we need to be going soft on criminals.

What we do have to make sure of is that we don't make it so easy for them to have access to deadly weapons. In neighborhoods like Chicago—but, I keep on using Chicago—this is all across the country. You go into any neighborhood, it used to be that parents would see some kids messing around on the corner, and they'd say, "Yo"—even if they weren't the parent of those children—"go back inside, stop doing that." And over time, it was a lot harder to discipline somebody else's kid and have the community maintain order or talk to police officers if somebody is doing something wrong, because now somebody is worried about getting shot.

And if we can create an environment that's just a little bit safer for—in those communities, that will help. And if it doesn't infringe on your Second Amendment rights, and it doesn't infringe on your Second Amendment rights, and you're still able to get a firearm for your protection, why wouldn't we want to do that?

Mr. Cooper. We've got to take a break. We're going to take a quick break. Our live town hall conversation, "Guns in America," with President Barack Obama continues right after this.

[*At this point, there was a commercial break. Mr. Cooper then resumed his remarks as follows.*]

Mr. Cooper. And welcome back. We're live at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, continuing our "360" town hall conversation with President Barack Obama, "Guns In America," talking to voices from all sides of the issue, including the President.

You made your announcement just the other day in a very obviously emotional ceremony at the White House. I want to play just a moment from it for those who haven't seen it.

[*A video of a portion of the President's January 5 remarks on gun violence was shown. Mr. Cooper then resumed his remarks as follows.*]

Mr. Cooper. I think a lot of people were surprised by that moment.

2012 Shooting in Newtown, Connecticut/Crime Prevention Efforts

The President. I was too, actually. I visited Newtown 2 days after what happened, so it was still very raw. It's the only time I've ever seen Secret Service cry on duty. And it wasn't just the parents. You had siblings—10-year-olds, 8-year-olds, 3-year-olds—who, in some cases, didn't even understand that their brother or sister weren't going to be coming home. And I've said this before, it continues to haunt me. It was one of the worst days of my Presidency.

But look, I want to emphasize that there are a lot of tragedies that happen out there as a

consequence of the victims of crime. There are police officers who are out there laying down their lives to protect us every single day—and tears are appropriate for them as well, and I visit with those families as well—victims of terrorism, soldiers coming home.

There's a lot of heartache out there. And I don't suggest that this is the only kind of heartache we should be working on. I spend a lot of time and a lot of hours—in fact, a lot more hours than I spend on this—trying to prevent terrorist attacks. I spend a lot of time and a lot of hours trying to make sure that we're continuing to reduce our crime rate.

There are a whole bunch of other answers that are just as important when it comes to making sure that the streets of places like Chicago and Baltimore are safer, making sure kids get a good early childhood education, making sure that we're teaching conflict resolution that doesn't involve violence, making sure that faith communities are able to reach out to young people and intervene in timely ways.

So this is not a recipe for solving every problem. Again, I just want to emphasize that the goal here is just to make progress. And it's interesting, as I enter into my last year as President, I could not be prouder of the work that we've done. But it also makes you really humble, because you realize that change takes a long time, and a lot of the work you do is just to incrementally make things better so that, 10 years from now, 20 years from now, the crime rate has gone down.

That's not just because of my administration, that's—the groundwork was laid by a bunch of good work by law enforcement and others for years, across administrations, on a bipartisan basis.

The same is true with traffic safety. The same is true with advances in medicine. The same can be true with this if we stop exaggerating or mischaracterizing the positions of either side and we just come up with some sensible areas that people agree with. Background checks are an example: The majority of gun owners agree with this.

Mr. Cooper. You talk about faith communities. Father Michael Pfleger is here. I know you know him well. He's a Roman Catholic priest in Chicago. For those who don't know, his church is St. Sabina on the South Side of Chicago. I was there about a month ago. It was a great honor to be there.

Father, you've given a lot of eulogies for a lot of kids in your community, far too many over the 40 years that you have been there. What your question for the President?

U.S. Military's "Jade Helm 15" Exercise/Gun Licensing and Registration/Smart-Gun Technology

Q. Mr. President, first of all, thank you for your courage and your passion, and keep pushing. I happen to be from one of those cities where violence is not going down. Not only, as Anderson mentioned, the 55 shot, there's been 11 killed in 7 days in Chicago. And one of the main reasons for that is the easy access to guns. It's easier to get a gun in my neighborhood than it is a computer. And the reality is, is because many of those guns have been bought legally. And I understand why people are pushing against you, because I understand it's a business and it's about a business, and so if we cut back the easy access to guns, less money for the gun manufacturers, less money for the gun lobby. I understand the business of it. But that business is causing blood and the kids that are dying in Chicago. And for many years, nobody even cared about Chicago because the violence is primarily Black and Brown.

The reality is that I don't understand why we can't title guns just like cars. If I have a car and I give it to you, Mr. President, and I don't transfer a title and you're in an accident, it's on me. We don't take cars away by putting titles on them. Why can't we do that with guns and every gun in America? So if somebody who's buying 200 guns, selling them on the streets, if they can't transfer those titles, then they're going to be held responsible for the guns that they sell.

The President. Well, Father Mike, first of all, for those of you who don't know him, has been working since I—since before I moved to Chicago, and I was a 23-year-old when I first

met him. And somehow, I aged, and he didn't, which—[*laughter*].

Mr. Cooper. Your gray hair is not going back, I can tell you from experience.

The President. He was always the best looking priest in Chicago. So—[*laughter*]. But Father Pfleger has done heroic work at St. Sabina Parish.

Issues like licensing, registration, that's an area where there's just not enough national consensus at this stage to even consider it. And part of it is, is people's concern that that becomes a prelude to taking people's guns away. I mean, part of the challenge in this is that the gun debate gets wrapped up in broader debates about whether the Federal Government is oppressive. And there are conspiracy theories floating around the Internet these days all the time. We did a military exercise in Texas—[*laughter*]—and a whole bunch of folks were sure that this was the start of martial law and were suggesting maybe don't cooperate with the United States Army in an effort to prepare so that if they get deployed overseas, they can handle it. But that's how difficult sometimes these debates are.

But there—but I want to pick up on some things where I think there should be consensus. One of those areas that I talked about at the speech, part of the proposal, is developing smart gun technology. Now, this is an interesting example. I don't exactly understand this, and maybe there will be somebody in the audience who explains it to me. Back in 1997, the CEO of Colt said we can design or are starting to develop guns where you can only use it if you've got a chip, so you wear a band or a bracelet, and that then protects your 2-year-old or 3-year-old from picking up the gun and using it. And a boycott was called against him, and they had to back off of developing that technology. The same with Smith & Wesson. They were in the process of developing similar technology, and they were attacked by the NRA as "surrendering."

Now, to me, this does not make sense. If you are a gun owner, I would think that you would at least want a choice so that if you wanted to purchase a firearm that could only be used by you—in part to avoid accidents in your home; in part to make sure that if it's stolen, it's not used by a criminal; in part, if there's an intruder, you pull the gun, but you—somehow, it gets wrested away from you, that gun can't be turned on you and used on you—I would think there might be a market for that. You could sell that gun.

Now, I'm not saying that necessarily would be the only gun that's available, but it seems to me that that would be something that in any other area, in any other product, any other commercial venture, there would be some research and development on that because that's a promising technology.

Mr. Cooper. Can I—I want to——

The President. It has not been developed primarily because it's been blocked by either the NRA, which is funded by gun manufacturers, or other reasons. In part, what we proposed was, you know what, we're going to do some of the research. We'll work with the private sector. We'll figure out whether or not this technology can be developed and then give everybody a choice in terms of the kind of firearm that they want to purchase. Because I think that there will in fact be a market for that. And over time, that's an example of how we could reduce some of the preventable gun deaths that are out there.

Mr. Cooper. I want to bring in somebody who actually knows a lot about selling guns. I want you to meet Kris Jacob. He's vice president of the American Firearms Retailers Association. And he's the owner of the Bullseye Indoor Shooting Range and gun store in San Rafael, California. Kris, it's great to have you here. First of all, how is business under President Obama? Because everything I read says——

The President. Great.

Mr. Cooper. ——gun sales have been going up. Every time he talks about guns, gun sales go up.

Background Check System/Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives/Enforcement of Gun Laws

Q. It's been busy. And certainly, I think that shows, as Taya said earlier, that there's a very

serious concern in this country about personal security. And the sheriff is right: They do everything they possibly can to make sure they get there as quickly as they possibly can. And my question is actually focused around law enforcement as well. There are 53,000 licensed gun dealers in the United States who stand behind the counter and say "no" to people all day.

The President. Yes.

Q. We feel it's our responsibility to make sure that people who have a criminal past, people who are mentally ill or are having a bad day don't get possession of firearms.

The President. Right.

Q. So we assist law enforcement all the time in the process of making sure that those things don't change hands inside our commercial market if they shouldn't. It's a very serious responsibility for us, and as a group, we take it very seriously.

My question is around the Executive order related to the investigators, the inspectors, the adding of 200 inspectors who are more on the auditing and record-keeping side. Why not add 200 ATF agents on the law enforcement side to keep the criminals and the bad guys out of the stores in the first place? I mean, the problem seems to me to be—you mentioned dealers who are less responsible than others, and certainly, it's possible that those folks are out there, but if we can enforce the laws that already exist, the tens of thousands of gun laws that are on the books right now, it might create a very significant deterrent in just getting those people in the stores.

Mr. Cooper. Kris, let me also point out the number of ATF agents during your administration has actually declined. So even if you hired 200 more——

The President. Yes, but not because of my budget, but because of——

Mr. Cooper. But even if you hired 200 more, it will get it to what it was right before you took office.

The President. Absolutely. Well, look, first of all, there are a whole bunch of responsible gun dealers out there. And my hope would be that those gun dealers would support making sure that everybody is following the same rules that they are. That's number one.

Number two is, we're not writing a new law. Only Congress can do that. This is about enforcing existing laws and closing what has grown into a massive loophole where a huge percentage of guns—many of whom end up being traced to crime—are not going through the responsible gun dealers, but are going through irresponsible folks who are not registered as doing business. And the whole goal here is to clarify and to put on notice that if you're a business, even if you don't have bricks and mortar, then you're supposed to register, and you're supposed to conduct background checks. So the issue is not where you do it, it's what you're doing. And that should not be something that threatens responsible gun dealers across the country.

In terms of the ATF, it is absolutely true that the ATF budget has been shrank because—has been shrunk—it's a little late—[*laughter*]—but you knew what I meant—[*laughter*]—and part of it is because the politicizing of this issue. So many in the Republican Congress feel as if the ATF is not their friend, but their enemy. Part of the story I was telling——

Mr. Cooper. You said this issue should be politicized though.

The President. Well, but what I mean by that, Anderson, is, is that they have been portrayed as trying to take people's guns away as opposed to trying to make sure that the laws are enforced. And one of the most frustrating things that I hear is when people say—who are opposed to any further laws—"Why don't you just enforce the laws that are on the books?" And those very same Members of Congress then cut ATF budgets to make it impossible to enforce the law.

And so it is—and by the way, the ATF is a law enforcement agency working under the FBI that is doing enormous work in going after criminals and drug cartels and have a pretty dangerous job. So it's not as if doing background checks or auditing gun sales is all that they're doing.

Part of my proposal is also developing better technologies so that we can do tracing of shells

when a crime is committed in order to figure out who exactly are the perpetrators of the crime and where did they obtain the weapon. So there's a whole bunch of other elements to this that are going to be important. But my hope is, is that responsible gun dealers like yourself and your organization are going to be supportive of this proposal, because it should actually help push away unscrupulous dealers, and that means more customers for you guys.

Mr. Cooper. I want to bring in Mark Kelly. As you know, a former astronaut, husband of former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, who, we're proud to say, is here tonight. Five years ago this week in Tucson, Arizona, Congresswoman Giffords was shot. Six others were killed. Captain, your question?

Former Representative Gabrielle D. Giffords/Gun Confiscation Fears

Q. Well, thank you for being here, Mr. President. As you know, Gabby and I are both gun owners. We take gun ownership very seriously and really think about the voices of responsible gun owners in this debate. But I want to follow up to something Father Pfleger said and your answer to his question, and it's about expanded background checks. Often, what you hear in the debate of expanding background checks to more gun sales—and as you know, Gabby and I are 100-percent behind the concept of somebody getting a background check before buying a gun—but when we testified in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee, we heard not only from the gun lobby, but from United States Senators that expanding background checks will—not may—will lead to a registry, which will lead to confiscation, which will lead to a tyrannical Government.

So I would like you to explain, with 350 million guns in 65 million places, households, from Key West to Alaska—350 million objects in 65 million places—if the Federal Government wanted to confiscate those objects, how would they do that? [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, look, first of all, every time I see Gabby, I'm just so thrilled because I had visited her in the hospital, and as I mentioned, I think, in the speech in the White House, as we left the hospital then to go to a memorial service, we got word that Gabby had opened her eyes for the first time. And we did not think that she was going to be here, and she is. And Mark has just been extraordinary. And by the way, Mark's twin brother is up in space right now—[*laughter*]—and is breaking the record for the longest continuous orbiting of the planet, which is pretty impressive stuff.

What I think Mark is alluding to is what I said earlier, this notion of a conspiracy out there, and it gets wrapped up in concerns about the Federal Government. Now, there's a long history of that. That's in our DNA. The United States was born suspicious of some distant authority.

Mr. Cooper. But let me just jump in—is it fair to call it a conspiracy?

The President. Well, yes.

Mr. Cooper. I mean, there's a lot of people who really believe this deeply, that they just don't trust you.

The President. I'm sorry, Cooper, yes it is fair to call it a conspiracy. What are you saying? Are the—are you suggesting that the notion that we are creating a plot to take everybody's guns away so that we can impose martial law——

Mr. Cooper. Not everybody, but there is certainly a lot of people——

The President. ——is a conspiracy? Yes, that is a conspiracy. I would hope that you would agree with that. Is that controversial, except on some websites around the country?

Mr. Cooper. There are certainly a lot of people who just have a fundamental distrust that you do not want to get—go further and further and further down this road.

The President. Look, I mean, I'm only going to be here for another year. [*Laughter*] I don't know—when would I have started on this enterprise, right? [*Laughter*]

I come from the State of Illinois, which—we've been talking about Chicago, but downstate Illinois is closer to Kentucky than it is to Chicago. And everybody hunts down there, and a lot of folks own guns. And so this is not, like, alien territory to me. I've got a lot of friends like Mark who are hunters. I just came back from

Alaska, where I ate a moose that had just been shot, and it was pretty good. [*Laughter*]

So yes, it is a false notion that I believe is circulated for either political reasons or commercial reasons in order to prevent a coming together among people of good will to develop commonsense rules that will make us safer while preserving the Second Amendment.

And the notion that we can't agree on some things while not agreeing on others and the reason for that is because, "Well, the President secretly wants to do X," would mean that we'd be paralyzed about doing everything. I mean, maybe when I propose to make sure that unsafe drugs are taken off the market that, secretly, I'm trying to control the entire drug industry or take people's drugs away. But probably not. [*Laughter*] What's more likely is, I just want to make sure that people are not dying by taking bad drugs.

Gun Control Legislation/2016 Presidential and Congressional Elections

Mr. Cooper. You wrote an op-ed that just got published.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Cooper. A lot of people probably have not read it yet. One of the things you say in it is that you are not going to campaign for, vote for any candidate, regardless of what party they're in, if they do not support commonsense gun reform.

The President. Yes. I meant what I said. And the reason I said that is this: The majority of people in this country are a lot more sensible than what you see in Washington, and the reason that Washington doesn't work well in part is because the loudest, shrillest voices, the least compromising, the most powerful or those with the most money have the most influence.

And the way Washington changes is when people vote. And the way we break the deadlock on this issue is when Congress does not have just a stranglehold on this debate—or, excuse me, the NRA does not have a stranglehold on Congress in this debate, but it is balanced by a whole bunch of folks: gun owners, law enforcement, the majority of the American people. When their voices are heard, then things get done.

The proposals that we've put forward are a version—a lawful, more narrow version—of what was proposed by Joe Manchin and Senator Toomey of Pennsylvania, a Republican and a Democrat, both of whom get straight-A scores from the NRA. And somehow, after Newtown, that did not pass the Senate. The majority of Senators wanted it, but 90 percent of Republicans voted against it. And I'll be honest with you, 90 percent of those Senators didn't disagree with the proposal, but they were fearful that it was going to affect them during the election.

So all I'm saying is, is that this debate will not change and get balanced out so that lawful gun owners and their Second Amendment rights are protected, but we're also creating a pathway towards a safer set of communities—it's not going to change until those who are concerned about violence are not as focused and disciplined during election time as those who are. And I'm going to throw my shoulders behind folks who want to actually solve problems instead of just getting a high score from an interest group.

Mr. Cooper. We have time for one more question. And we talked about Chicago a little bit. We haven't really heard from young people tonight—no offense to those who have spoken. [*Laughter*] Because I'm in the same category as you all. Sorry, Father.

The President. You're a kid.

Mr. Cooper. There's a lot of kids, as you know, growing up in Chicago, fearful of walking to school, fearful of coming home from school.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Cooper. A lot of kids have been killed on buses. There's a lot of moms of kids who have been killed in the streets of Chicago. And I want you to meet Trey Bosley. He's 18 years old. He's a high school student whose brother Terrell was shot and killed nearly 10 years ago while he was helping a friend in a church parking lot. Terrell would have turned 28 years old on this Tuesday. What's your question, Trey?

Gun Violence Prevention Efforts/Gun Violence Research

Q. Yes. As you said, I lost my brother a few years ago—well, 10 years ago. And I've also lost a countless amount of family members and friends to gun violence as well. And just speaking, growing up as a young Black teen in Chicago, where you're surrounded by not only just gun violence, but police brutality as well, most of aren't thinking of our life on a long-term scale. Most of us are either thinking day to day, hour to hour, for some, even minute to minute. I want to thank you for your stand against gun violence for not only the victims of gun violence, but those on the verge of being victims of gun violence. And my question to you is, what is your advice to those youth growing up surrounded by poverty and gun violence?

The President. Well, first of all, Terell, I couldn't be prouder of you. And I know—is that your momma next to you? I know she's proud of you right now. [*Laughter*] So good job, Mom.

When I see you, Terrell, I think I about my own——

Mr. Cooper. Trey.

The President. Excuse me—Trey. When I see you, I think about my own youth, because I wasn't that different from you. Probably not as articulate and maybe more of a goof-off. But the main difference was, I lived in a more forgiving environment. If I screwed up, I wasn't at risk of getting shot. I'd get a second chance. There were a bunch of folks who were looking out for me, and there weren't a lot of guns on the streets. And that's how all kids should be growing up, wherever they live.

I mean, my main advice to you is to continue to be an outstanding role model for the young ones who are coming up behind you. Keep listening to your mom. Work hard and get an education. Understand that high school and whatever peer pressure or restrictions you're under right now won't matter by the time you're a full adult and what matters is your future. But what I also want to say to you is, is that you're really important to the future of this country.

And I think it is critical in this debate to understand that it's not just inner-city kids who are at risk in these situations. Out of the 30,000 deaths due to gun violence, about two-thirds of them are actually suicides. Now, that's part of the reason why we've—are investing more heavily also in mental health under my proposal.

But while the majority of victims of gun homicide are Black or Hispanic, the overwhelming majority of suicides by young people are White. And those, too, are tragedies. Those, too, are preventable. I'm the father of two outstanding young women, but being a teenager is tough. And we've all—remember the times where you get confused, you're angry, and then the next thing you know, if you have access to a firearm, what kind of bad decisions you might make. So those are deaths we also want to prevent.

Accidental shootings are also deaths we want to prevent. And we're not going to prevent all of them. But we can do better. We're not going to, through this initiative alone, solve all the problems of inner-city crime. Some of that, as I said, has to do with investing in these communities and making sure there's good education and jobs and opportunity and great parents. And moral responsibility and ethical behavior and instilling that in our kids, that's going to be important.

So this is not a proposal to solve every problem. It's a modest way of us getting started on improving the prospects of young men and young women like you, the same way we try to improve every other aspect of our lives. That's all it is.

And if we get started—as I said before, it used to be, people didn't wear seatbelts, didn't have airbags. It takes 20, 30 years, but you look, and then you realize all these amazing lives of young people like this who are contributing to our society because we came together in a practical way, looking at evidence, looking at data, and figured out: How can we make that work better?

Right now Congress prohibits us even studying, through the Center for Disease Control, ways in which we could reduce gun violence.

That's how crazy this thing has become. Let's at least figure out what works. And some of the proposals that I'm making may turn out are not as effective as others. But at least let's figure it out; let's try some things. Let's not just assume that every few weeks there's a mass shooting that gets publicity, every few months there's one that gets national publicity, every day there are a whole bunch of folks shot on streets around the country that we don't even hear about. That is not something that we can be satisfied with.

And part of my faith and hope in America is just that—not that we achieve a perfect Union, but that we get better. And we can do better than we're doing right now if we come together.

So thank you.

Mr. Cooper. Mr. President, thank you very much for your time. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Appreciate it very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8 p.m. in Dewberry Hall of the George W. Johnson Center at George Mason University. In his remarks, he referred to Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch; Min Yingjun, who was arrested for stabbing 22 children outside their school in the village of Chengping in Henan Province, China, on December 14, 2012; Ronald L. Stewart, former chief executive officer, Colt Manufacturing Co.; Cmdr. Scott J. Kelly, crewmember, International Space Station; and Pamela Bosley, mother of Terrell Bosley, who was killed in a shooting in Chicago, IL, on April 4, 2006. He also referred to his nieces Savit and Suhaila Ng and nephews Aaron L. and Austin Robinson. The related memorandum of January 4 promoting smart-gun technology is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the Restoring Americans' Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act of 2015

January 8, 2016

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 3762, which provides for reconciliation pursuant to section 2002 of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2016, herein referred to as the Reconciliation Act. This legislation would not only repeal parts of the Affordable Care Act, but would reverse the significant progress we have made in improving health care in America. The Affordable Care Act includes a set of fairer rules and stronger consumer protections that have made health care coverage more affordable, more attainable, and more patient centered. And it is working. About 17.6 million Americans have gained health care coverage as the law's coverage provisions have taken effect. The Nation's uninsured rate now stands at its lowest level ever, and demand for Marketplace coverage during December 2015 was at an all-time high. Health care costs are lower than expected when the law was passed, and health care quality is higher—with improvements in patient safety saving an estimated 87,000 lives. Health care has changed for the better, setting this country on a smarter, stronger course.

The Reconciliation Act would reverse that course. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the legislation would increase the number of uninsured Americans by 22 million after 2017. The Council of Economic Advisers estimates that this reduction in health care coverage could mean, each year, more than 900,000 fewer people getting all their needed care, more than 1.2 million additional people having trouble paying other bills due to higher medical costs, and potentially more than 10,000 additional deaths. This legislation would cost millions of hard-working middle-class families the security of affordable health coverage they deserve. Reliable health care coverage would no longer be a right for everyone: it would return to being a privilege for a few.

The legislation's implications extend far beyond those who would become uninsured. For example, about 150 million Americans with employer-based insurance would be at risk of higher premiums and lower wages. And it would cause the cost of health coverage for people buying it on their own to skyrocket.

The Reconciliation Act would also effectively defund Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood uses both Federal and non-federal funds to provide a range of important preventive care and health services, including health screenings, vaccinations, and check-ups to millions of men and women who visit their health centers annually. Longstanding Federal policy already prohibits the use of Federal funds for abortions, except in cases of rape or incest or when the life of the woman would be endangered. By eliminating Federal Medicaid funding for a major provider of health care, H.R. 3762 would limit access to health care for men, women, and families across the Nation, and would disproportionately impact low-income individuals.

Republicans in the Congress have attempted to repeal or undermine the Affordable Care Act over 50 times. Rather than refighting old political battles by once again voting to repeal basic protections that provide security for the middle class, Members of Congress should be working together to grow the economy, strengthen middle-class families, and create new jobs. Because of the harm this bill would cause to the health and financial security of millions of Americans, it has earned my veto.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
January 8, 2016.

The President's Weekly Address
January 9, 2016

Hi, everybody. Seven years ago, the American auto industry was on the brink of collapse. Plants were closing. Hundreds of thousands of workers were getting laid off from jobs that had been their ticket to a middle class life. And as the pain spread across the country, another 1 million Americans would have lost their jobs in the middle of the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes.

Some said it was too late to turn things around. But I refused to turn my back on so many of the workers that I had met. Instead, I placed my bet on American workers. I placed my bet on American manufacturing. In exchange for help, we demanded responsibility. We said the auto industry would have to truly change, not just pretend that it did. We got labor and management to settle their differences. We got the industry to retool and restructure. Everyone had some skin in the game.

Our plan wasn't popular. Critics said it was a "road to socialism," or a "disaster" waiting to happen. But I'd make that bet again any day of the week. Because today, the American auto industry is back. Since our plan went into effect, our automakers have added more than 640,000 new jobs. We've cut the Detroit-area unemployment rate by more than half. The Big Three automakers are raising wages. Seven years ago, auto sales hit a 27-year low. Last year, they hit an alltime high. Later this month, I'll visit the Detroit Auto Show to see this progress firsthand. Because I believe that every American should be proud of what our most iconic industry has done.

It's not unlike what America overall has done these past 7 years. Our businesses are now on a 70-month streak of job creation, with more than 14 million new jobs in all. We've revamped our schools and the way we pay for college. We've made historic investments in clean energy and put ourselves on a path to a low-carbon future. We've brought more than 17 million Americans into our health care system, seen health care prices grow at the lowest rate in 50 years, and covered more than 90 percent of our people for the very first time. We've even cut our deficits by nearly 75 percent in the process.

The point is, America can do anything. Even in times of great challenge and change, our future is entirely up to us. That's been on my mind while I'm writing my final State of the Union Address. And on Tuesday, I'm going to talk about the choices we have to make to set this country firmly on an even better, brighter course for decades to come.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:10 p.m. on January 8 in the Grand Foyer at the White House for broadcast on January 9. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 8, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 9. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union
January 12, 2016

Thank you. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of Congress, my fellow Americans: Tonight marks the eighth year that I've come here to report on the state of the Union. And for this final one, I'm going to try to make it a little shorter. I know some of you are antsy to get back to Iowa. [*Laughter*] I've been there. I'll be shaking hands afterwards if you want some tips. [*Laughter*]

Now, I understand that because it's an election season, expectations for what we will achieve this year are low. But, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the constructive approach that you and other leaders took at the end of last year to pass a budget and make tax cuts permanent for working families. So I hope we can work together this year on some bipartisan priorities like criminal justice reform and helping people who are battling prescription drug abuse and heroin abuse. So, who knows, we might surprise the cynics again.

But tonight I want to go easy on the traditional list of proposals for the year ahead. Don't worry, I've got plenty—[*laughter*]—from helping students learn to write computer code to personalizing medical treatments for patients. And I will keep pushing for progress on the work that I believe still needs to be done: fixing a broken immigration system, protecting our kids from gun violence, equal pay for equal work, paid leave, raising the minimum wage. All these things still matter to hard-working families. They're still the right thing to do. And I won't let up until they get done.

But for my final address to this Chamber, I don't want to just talk about next year. I want to focus on the next 5 years, the next 10 years, and beyond. I want to focus on our future.

We live in a time of extraordinary change, change that's reshaping the way we live, the way we work, our planet, our place in the world. It's change that promises amazing medical breakthroughs, but also economic disruptions that strain working families. It promises education for girls in the most remote villages, but also connects terrorists plotting an ocean away. It's change that can broaden opportunity or widen inequality. And whether we like it or not, the pace of this change will only accelerate.

America has been through big changes before: wars and depression, the influx of new immigrants, workers fighting for a fair deal, movements to expand civil rights. Each time, there have been those who told us to fear the future; who claimed we could slam the brakes on change; who promised to restore past glory if we just got some group or idea that was threatening America under control. And each time, we overcame those fears. We did not, in the words of Lincoln, adhere to the "dogmas of the quiet past." Instead, we thought anew and acted anew. We made change work for us, always extending America's promise outward, to the next frontier, to more people. And because we did, because we saw opportunity with a—where others saw peril, we emerged stronger and better than before.

What was true then can be true now. Our unique strengths as a nation—our optimism

and work ethic, our spirit of discovery, our diversity, our commitment to rule of law—these things give us everything we need to ensure prosperity and security for generations to come.

In fact, it's in that spirit that we have made progress these past 7 years. That's how we recovered from the worst economic crisis in generations. That's how we reformed our health care system and reinvented our energy sector. That's how we delivered more care and benefits to our troops coming home and our veterans. That's how we secured the freedom in every State to marry the person we love.

But such progress is not inevitable. It's the result of choices we make together. And we face such choices right now. Will we respond to the changes of our time with fear, turning inward as a nation, turning against each other as a people? Or will we face the future with confidence in who we are, in what we stand for, in the incredible things that we can do together?

So let's talk about the future and four big questions that I believe we as a country have to answer, regardless of who the next President is or who controls the next Congress. First, how do we give everyone a fair shot at opportunity and security in this new economy? Second, how do we make technology work for us and not against us, especially when it comes to solving urgent challenges like climate change? Third, how do we keep America safe and lead the world without becoming its policeman? And finally, how can we make our politics reflect what's best in us and not what's worst?

Let me start with the economy and a basic fact: The United States of America right now has the strongest, most durable economy in the world. We're in the middle of the longest streak of private sector job creation in history. More than 14 million new jobs, the strongest 2 years of job growth since the 1990s, an unemployment rate cut in half. Our auto industry just had its best year ever. That's just part of a manufacturing surge that's created nearly 900,000 new jobs in the past 6 years. And we've done all this while cutting our deficits by almost three-quarters.

Anyone claiming that America's economy is in decline is peddling fiction. Now, what is true—and the reason that a lot of Americans feel anxious—is that the economy has been changing in profound ways, changes that started long before the great recession hit, changes that have not let up.

Today, technology doesn't just replace jobs on the assembly line, but any job where work can be automated. Companies in a global economy can locate anywhere, and they face tougher competition. As a result, workers have less leverage for a raise. Companies have less loyalty to their communities. And more and more wealth and income is concentrated at the very top.

All these trends have squeezed workers, even when they have jobs, even when the economy is growing. It's made it harder for a hard-working family to pull itself out of poverty, harder for young people to start their careers, tougher for workers to retire when they want to. And although none of these trends are unique to America, they do offend our uniquely American belief that everybody who works hard should get a fair shot.

For the past 7 years, our goal has been a growing economy that also works better for everybody. We've made progress, but we need to make more. And despite all the political arguments that we've had these past few years, there are actually some areas where Americans broadly agree.

We agree that real opportunity requires every American to get the education and training they need to land a good-paying job. The bipartisan reform of No Child Left Behind was an important start, and together, we've increased early childhood education, lifted high school graduation rates to new highs, boosted graduates in fields like engineering. In the coming years, we should build on that progress, by providing pre-K for all and offering every student the hands-on computer science and math classes that make them job-ready on day one. We should recruit and support more great teachers for our kids.

And we have to make college affordable for every American. No hard-working student

should be stuck in the red. We've already reduced student loan payments by—to 10 percent of a borrower's income. And that's good. But now we've actually got to cut the cost of college. Providing 2 years of community college at no cost for every responsible student is one of the best ways to do that, and I'm going to keep fighting to get that started this year. It's the right thing to do.

But a great education isn't all we need in this new economy. We also need benefits and protections that provide a basic measure of security. It's not too much of a stretch to say that some of the only people in America who are going to work the same job, in the same place, with a health and retirement package for 30 years are sitting in this Chamber. [*Laughter*] For everyone else, especially folks in their forties and fifties, saving for retirement or bouncing back from job loss has gotten a lot tougher. Americans understand that at some point in their careers, in this new economy, they may have to retool, they may have to retrain. But they shouldn't lose what they've already worked so hard to build in the process.

That's why Social Security and Medicare are more important than ever. We shouldn't weaken them, we should strengthen them. And for Americans short of retirement, basic benefits should be just as mobile as everything else is today. That, by the way, is what the Affordable Care Act is all about. It's about filling the gaps in employer-based care so that when you lose a job or you go back to school or you strike out and launch that new business, you'll still have coverage. Nearly 18 million people have gained coverage so far. And in the process, health care inflation has slowed. And our businesses have created jobs every single month since it became law.

Now, I'm guessing we won't agree on health care anytime soon, but—[*laughter*]—a little applause back there. [*Laughter*] Just a guess. But there should be other ways parties can work together to improve economic security. Say a hard-working American loses his job. We shouldn't just make sure that he can get unemployment insurance, we should make sure that program encourages him to retrain for a business that's ready to hire him. If that new job doesn't pay as much, there should be a system of wage insurance in place so that he can still pay his bills. And even if he's going from job to job, he should still be able to save for retirement and take his savings with him. That's the way we make the new economy work better for everybody.

I also know Speaker Ryan has talked about his interest in tackling poverty. America is about giving everybody willing to work a chance, a hand up. And I'd welcome a serious discussion about strategies we can all support, like expanding tax cuts for low-income workers who don't have children.

But there are some areas where—we just have to be honest—it has been difficult to find agreement over the last 7 years. And a lot of them fall under the category of what role the Government should play in making sure the system's not rigged in favor of the wealthiest and biggest corporations. And it's an honest disagreement, and the American people have a choice to make.

I believe a thriving private sector is the lifeblood of our economy. I think there are outdated regulations that need to be changed. There is redtape that needs to be cut. [*Applause*] There you go! Yes! See? But after years now of record corporate profits, working families won't get more opportunity or bigger paychecks just by letting big banks or big oil or hedge funds make their own rules at everybody else's expense. Middle class families are not going to feel more secure because we allowed attacks on collective bargaining to go unanswered. Food stamp recipients did not cause the financial crisis; recklessness on Wall Street did. Immigrants aren't the principal reason wages haven't gone up; those decisions are made in the boardrooms that all too often put quarterly earnings over long-term returns. It's sure not the average family watching tonight that avoids paying taxes through offshore accounts. [*Laughter*]

The point is, I believe that in this new economy, workers and startups and small businesses need more of a voice, not less. The rules should work for them. And I'm not alone in

this. This year, I plan to lift up the many businesses who have figured out that doing right by their workers or their customers or their communities ends up being good for their shareholders. And I want to spread those best practices across America. That's part of a brighter future.

In fact, it turns out many of our best corporate citizens are also our most creative. And this brings me to the second big question we as a country have to answer: How do we reignite that spirit of innovation to meet our biggest challenges?

Sixty years ago, when the Russians beat us into space, we didn't deny Sputnik was up there. [*Laughter*] We didn't argue about the science or shrink our research and development budget. We built a space program almost overnight. And 12 years later, we were walking on the Moon.

Now, that spirit of discovery is in our DNA. America is Thomas Edison and the Wright Brothers and George Washington Carver. America is Grace Hopper and Katherine Johnson and Sally Ride. America is every immigrant and entrepreneur from Boston to Austin to Silicon Valley racing to shape a better future. That's who we are.

And over the past 7 years, we've nurtured that spirit. We've protected an open Internet and taken bold new steps to get more students and low-income Americans online. We've launched next-generation manufacturing hubs and online tools that give an entrepreneur everything he or she needs to start a business in a single day. But we can do so much more.

Last year, Vice President Biden said that with a new moonshot, America can cure cancer. Last month, he worked with this Congress to give scientists at the National Institutes of Health the strongest resources that they've had in over a decade. Well—so tonight I'm announcing a new national effort to get it done. And because he's gone to the mat for all of us on so many issues over the past 40 years, I'm putting Joe in charge of mission control. For the loved ones we've all lost, for the families that we can still save, let's make America the country that cures cancer once and for all. What do you say, Joe? Let's make it happen.

Now, medical research is critical. We need the same level of commitment when it comes to developing clean energy sources. Look, if anybody still wants to dispute the science around climate change, have at it. [*Laughter*] You will be pretty lonely, because you'll be debating our military, most of America's business leaders, the majority of the American people, almost the entire scientific community, and 200 nations around the world who agree it's a problem and intend to solve it. But even if the planet wasn't at stake, even if 2014 wasn't the warmest year on record—until 2015 turned out to be even hotter—why would we want to pass up the chance for American businesses to produce and sell the energy of the future?

Listen, 7 years ago, we made the single biggest investment in clean energy in our history. Here are the results. In fields from Iowa to Texas, wind power is now cheaper than dirtier, conventional power. On rooftops from Arizona to New York, solar is saving Americans tens of millions of dollars a year on their energy bills and employs more Americans than coal in jobs that pay better than average. We're taking steps to give homeowners the freedom to generate and store their own energy, something, by the way, that environmentalists and Tea Partiers have teamed up to support. And meanwhile, we've cut our imports of foreign oil by nearly 60 percent and cut carbon pollution more than any other country on Earth. Gas under 2 bucks a gallon ain't bad either. [*Laughter*]

Now we've got to accelerate the transition away from old, dirtier energy sources. Rather than subsidize the past, we should invest in the future, especially in communities that rely on fossil fuels. We do them no favor when we don't show them where the trends are going. And that's why I'm going to push to change the way we manage our oil and coal resources so that they better reflect the costs they impose on taxpayers and our planet. And that way, we put money back into those communities and put tens of thousands of Americans to work building a 21st-century transportation system.

Now, none of this is going to happen overnight. And yes, there are plenty of entrenched interests who want to protect the status quo. But the jobs we'll create, the money we'll save, the planet we'll preserve—that is the kind of future our kids and our grandkids deserve. And it's within our grasp.

Now, climate change is just one of many issues where our security is linked to the rest of the world. And that's why the third big question that we have to answer together is how to keep America safe and strong without either isolating ourselves or trying to nation-build everywhere there's a problem.

Now, I told you earlier all the talk of America's economic decline is political hot air. Well, so is all the rhetoric you hear about our enemies getting stronger and America getting weaker. Let me tell you something: The United States of America is the most powerful nation on Earth. Period. [*Applause*] Period. It's not even close. [*Applause*] It's not even close. It's not even close. We spend more on our military than the next eight nations combined. Our troops are the finest fighting force in the history of the world. [*Applause*] All right. No nation attacks us directly, or our allies, because they know that's the path to ruin. Surveys show our standing around the world is higher than when I was elected to this office, and when it comes to every important international issue, people of the world do not look to Beijing or Moscow to lead. They call us. So I think it's useful to level set here, because when we don't, we don't make good decisions.

Now, as someone who begins every day with an intelligence briefing, I know this is a dangerous time. But that's not primarily because of some looming superpower out there, and it's certainly not because of diminished American strength. In today's world, we're threatened less by evil empires and more by failing states.

The Middle East is going through a transformation that will play out for a generation, rooted in conflicts that date back millennia. Economic headwinds are blowing in from a Chinese economy that is in significant transition. Even as their economy severely contracts, Russia is pouring resources in to prop up Ukraine and Syria, client states that they saw slipping away from their orbit. And the international system we built after World War II is now struggling to keep pace with this new reality. It's up to us, the United States of America, to help remake that system. And to do that well, it means that we've got to set priorities.

Priority number one is protecting the American people and going after terrorist networks. Both Al Qaida and now ISIL pose a direct threat to our people, because in today's world, even a handful of terrorists who place no value on human life, including their own, can do a lot of damage. They use the Internet to poison the minds of individuals inside our country. Their actions undermine and destabilize our allies. We have to take them out.

But as we focus on destroying ISIL, over-the-top claims that this is World War III just play into their hands. Masses of fighters on the back of pickup trucks, twisted souls plotting in apartments or garages, they pose an enormous danger to civilians; they have to be stopped. But they do not threaten our national existence. That is the story ISIL wants to tell. That's the kind of propaganda they use to recruit. We don't need to build them up to show that we're serious, and we sure don't need to push away vital allies in this fight by echoing the lie that ISIL is somehow representative of one of the world's largest religions. We just need to call them what they are: killers and fanatics who have to be rooted out, hunted down, and destroyed.

And that's exactly what we're doing. For more than a year, America has led a coalition of more than 60 countries to cut off ISIL's financing, disrupt their plots, stop the flow of terrorist fighters, and stamp out their vicious ideology. With nearly 10,000 airstrikes, we're taking out their leadership, their oil, their training camps, their weapons. We're training, arming, and supporting forces who are steadily reclaiming territory in Iraq and Syria.

If this Congress is serious about winning this war and wants to send a message to our troops and the world, authorize the use of military force against ISIL. Take a vote. [*Applause*] Take a vote. But the American people should

know that with or without congressional action, ISIL will learn the same lessons as terrorists before them. If you doubt America's commitment—or mine—to see that justice is done, just ask Usama bin Laden. Ask the leader of Al Qaida in Yemen, who was taken out last year, or the perpetrator of the Benghazi attacks, who sits in a prison cell. When you come after Americans, we go after you. And it may take time, but we have long memories, and our reach has no limits.

Our foreign policy has to be focused on the threat from ISIL and Al Qaida, but it can't stop there. For even without ISIL, even without Al Qaida, instability will continue for decades in many parts of the world: in the Middle East, in Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan, in parts of Central America and Africa and Asia. Some of these places may become safe havens for new terrorist networks. Others will just fall victim to ethnic conflict or famine, feeding the next wave of refugees. The world will look to us to help solve these problems, and our answer needs to be more than tough talk or calls to carpet-bomb civilians. That may work as a TV sound bite, but it doesn't pass muster on the world stage.

We also can't try to take over and rebuild every country that falls into crisis, even if it's done with the best of intentions. That's not leadership; that's a recipe for quagmire, spilling American blood and treasure that ultimately will weaken us. It's the lesson of Vietnam; it's the lesson of Iraq. And we should have learned it by now.

Now, fortunately there is a smarter approach: a patient and disciplined strategy that uses every element of our national power. It says America will always act, alone if necessary, to protect our people and our allies, but on issues of global concern, we will mobilize the world to work with us and make sure other countries pull their own weight. That's our approach to conflicts like Syria, where we're partnering with local forces and leading international efforts to help that broken society pursue a lasting peace.

That's why we built a global coalition, with sanctions and principled diplomacy, to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran. And as we speak, Iran has rolled back its nuclear program, shipped out its uranium stockpile, and the world has avoided another war.

That's how we stopped the spread of Ebola in West Africa. Our military, our doctors, our development workers—they were heroic; they set up the platform that then allowed other countries to join in behind us and stamp out that epidemic. Hundreds of thousands, maybe a couple million, lives were saved.

That's how we forged a Trans-Pacific Partnership to open markets and protect workers and the environment and advance American leadership in Asia. It cuts 18,000 taxes on products made in America, which will then support more good jobs here in America. With TPP, China does not set the rules in that region, we do. You want to show our strength in this new century? Approve this agreement. Give us the tools to enforce it. It's the right thing to do.

Let me give you another example. Fifty years of isolating Cuba had failed to promote democracy. It set us back in Latin America. That's why we restored diplomatic relations, opened the door to travel and commerce, positioned ourselves to improve the lives of the Cuban people. So if you want to consolidate our leadership and credibility in the hemisphere, recognize that the cold war is over. Lift the embargo.

The point is, American leadership in the 21st century is not a choice between ignoring the rest of the world—except when we kill terrorists—or occupying and rebuilding whatever society is unraveling. Leadership means a wise application of military power and rallying the world behind causes that are right. It means seeing our foreign assistance as a part of our national security, not something separate, not charity.

When we lead nearly 200 nations to the most ambitious agreement in history to fight climate change, yes, that helps vulnerable countries, but it also protects our kids. When we help Ukraine defend its democracy or Colombia resolve a decades-long war, that strengthens the international order we depend on. When we help African countries feed their

people and care for the sick, it's the right thing to do, and it prevents the next pandemic from reaching our shores. Right now we're on track to end the scourge of HIV/AIDS. That's within our grasp. And we have the chance to accomplish the same thing with malaria, something I'll be pushing this Congress to fund this year.

That's American strength. That's American leadership. And that kind of leadership depends on the power of our example. That's why I will keep working to shut down the prison at Guantanamo. It is expensive, it is unnecessary, and it only serves as a recruitment brochure for our enemies. There's a better way.

And that's why we need to reject any politics—any politics—that targets people because of race or religion. Let me just say this. This is not a matter of political correctness, this is a matter of understanding just what it is that makes us strong. The world respects us not just for our arsenal, it respects us for our diversity and our openness and the way we respect every faith.

His Holiness Pope Francis told this body from the very spot that I'm standing on tonight that "to imitate the hatred and violence of tyrants and murderers is the best way to take their place." When politicians insult Muslims, whether abroad or our fellow citizens, when a mosque is vandalized or a kid is called names, that doesn't make us safer. That's not telling it what—telling it like it is. It's just wrong. It diminishes us in the eyes of the world. It makes it harder to achieve our goals. It betrays who we are as a country.

"We the People." Our Constitution begins with those three simple words, words we've come to recognize mean all the people, not just some; words that insist we rise and fall together, that that's how we might perfect our Union. And that brings me to the fourth and maybe most important thing that I want to say tonight.

The future we want—all of us want—opportunity and security for our families, a rising standard of living, a sustainable, peaceful planet for our kids—all that is within our reach. But it will only happen if we work together. It will only happen if we can have rational, constructive debates. It will only happen if we fix our politics.

A better politics doesn't mean we have to agree on everything. This is a big country: different regions, different attitudes, different interests. That's one of our strengths too. Our Founders distributed power between States and branches of government and expected us to argue, just as they did, fiercely, over the size and shape of government, over commerce and foreign relations, over the meaning of liberty and the imperatives of security.

But democracy does require basic bonds of trust between its citizens. It doesn't work if we think the people who disagree with us are all motivated by malice. It doesn't work if we think that our political opponents are unpatriotic or trying to weaken America. Democracy grinds to a halt without a willingness to compromise or when even basic facts are contested or when we listen only to those who agree with us. Our public life withers when only the most extreme voices get all the attention. And most of all, democracy breaks down when the average person feels their voice doesn't matter, that the system is rigged in favor of the rich or the powerful or some special interest.

Too many Americans feel that way right now. It's one of the few regrets of my Presidency: that the rancor and suspicion between the parties has gotten worse instead of better. I have no doubt, a President with the gifts of Lincoln or Roosevelt might have better bridged the divide, and I guarantee, I'll keep trying to be better so long as I hold this office.

But, my fellow Americans, this cannot be my task—or any President's—alone. There are a whole lot of folks in this Chamber, good people, who would like to see more cooperation, would like to see a more elevated debate in Washington, but feel trapped by the imperatives of getting elected, by the noise coming out of your base. I know; you've told me. It's the worst kept secret in Washington. And a lot of you aren't enjoying being trapped in that kind of rancor.

But that means if we want a better politics—and I'm addressing the American people now—if we want a better politics, it's not

enough just to change a Congressman or change a Senator or even change a President. We have to change the system to reflect our better selves.

I think we've got to end the practice of drawing our congressional districts so that politicians can pick their voters and not the other way around. Let a bipartisan group do it.

I believe we've got to reduce the influence of money in our politics so that a handful of families or hidden interests can't bankroll our elections. And if our existing approach to campaign finance reform can't pass muster in the courts, we need to work together to find a real solution. Because it's a problem. And most of you don't like raising money. [*Laughter*] I know. I've done it.

We've got to make it easier to vote, not harder. We need to modernize it for the way we live now. This is America: We want to make it easier for people to participate. And over the course of this year, I intend to travel the country to push for reforms that do just that.

But I can't do these things on my own. Changes in our political process—in not just who gets elected, but how they get elected—that will only happen when the American people demand it. It depends on you. That's what's meant by a government of, by, and for the people.

What I'm suggesting is hard. It's a lot easier to be cynical; to accept that change is not possible and politics is hopeless and the problem is all the folks who are elected don't care; and to believe that our voices and our actions don't matter. But if we give up now, then we forsake a better future. Those with money and power will gain greater control over the decisions that could send a young soldier to war or allow another economic disaster or roll back the equal rights and voting rights that generations of Americans have fought, even died, to secure. And then, as frustration grows, there will be voices urging us to fall back into our respective tribes, to scapegoat fellow citizens who don't look like us or pray like us or vote like we do or share the same background.

We can't afford to go down that path. It won't deliver the economy we want. It will not produce the security we want. But most of all, it contradicts everything that makes us the envy of the world.

So, my fellow Americans, whatever you may believe, whether you prefer one party or no party, whether you supported my agenda or fought as hard as you could against it, our collective futures depends on your willingness to uphold your duties as a citizen. To vote. To speak out. To stand up for others, especially the weak, especially the vulnerable, knowing that each of us is only here because somebody, somewhere, stood up for us. We need every American to stay active in our public life—and not just during election time—so that our public life reflects the goodness and the decency that I see in the American people every single day.

It is not easy. Our brand of democracy is hard. But I can promise that a little over a year from now, when I no longer hold this office, I will be right there with you as a citizen, inspired by those voices of fairness and vision, of grit and good humor and kindness, that have helped America travel so far. Voices that help us see ourselves not, first and foremost, as Black or White or Asian or Latino, not as gay or straight, immigrant or native born, not Democrat or Republican, but as Americans first, bound by a common creed. Voices Dr. King believed would have the final word: voices of "unarmed truth and unconditional love."

And they're out there, those voices. They don't get a lot of attention; they don't seek a lot of fanfare; but they're busy doing the work this country needs doing. I see them everywhere I travel in this incredible country of ours. I see you, the American people. And in your daily acts of citizenship, I see our future unfolding.

I see it in the worker on the assembly line who clocked extra shifts to keep his company open and the boss who pays him higher wages instead of laying him off. I see it in the dreamer who stays up late at night to finish her science project and the teacher who comes in early, maybe with some extra supplies that she bought because she knows that that young girl might someday cure a disease.

I see it in the American who served his time, made bad mistakes as a child, but now is dreaming of starting over. And I see it in the business owner who gives him that second chance. The protester determined to prove that justice matters and the young cop walking the beat, treating everybody with respect, doing the brave, quiet work of keeping us safe.

I see it in the soldier who gives almost everything to save his brothers, the nurse who tends to him till he can run a marathon, the community that lines up to cheer him on. It's the son who finds the courage to come out as who he is and the father whose love for that son overrides everything he's been taught.

I see it in the elderly woman who will wait in line to cast her vote as long as she has to, the new citizen who casts his vote for the first time, the volunteers at the polls who believe every vote should count. Because each of them, in different ways, know how much that precious right is worth.

That's the America I know. That's the country we love: clear eyed, big hearted, undaunted by challenge. Optimistic that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word. That's what makes me so hopeful about our future. I believe in change because I believe in you, the American people. And that's why I stand here as confident as I have ever been that the state of our Union is strong.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:10 p.m. in the House Chamber of the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul D. Ryan; Katherine G. Johnson, former physicist and research mathematician, National Aeronautics and Space Administration; and Ahmed Abu Khattala, suspected perpetrator of the terrorist attacks on the U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya, on September 11, 2012. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at the University of Nebraska Omaha in Omaha, Nebraska
January 13, 2016

The President. Hello, Omaha! Thank you! Oh! Thank you. Thank you. Well, thank you so much. Thank you, Omaha. That's so nice, thank you. Well, thank you so much. Go Mavericks! This is quite a place you got here. It's still got the new arena smell. [*Laughter*] A perfect spot for your hockey team to stage another run to the Frozen Four.

I want to start off by thanking Lisa for the wonderful introduction and her hospitality in her living room. Give her a big round of applause. She did a great job. Before I came here I stopped over at Lisa's place, with her husband and her 1-year-old. And he was fired up and ready to go. [*Laughter*] He was bouncing around, and I was getting tired just watching him. [*Laughter*]

I also want to thank Dr. Hank Bounds, the President of the University of Nebraska; Dr. John Christensen, Chancellor here at UNO. We've got Lieutenant Governor Mike Foley here; your former Senator, Ben Nelson; your Congressman, Brad Ashford. And all of you are here. This is a pretty good crowd!

Audience member. Love you!

The President. I love you back. I do. I do. I do. This is so nice. What a wonderful welcome. Those of you who have seats, though, feel free to sit down. It's okay. [*Laughter*] But if you want to stay standing, that's fine too.

Last night I gave my final State of the Union Address. And I promised that it was going to be shorter, and then it ended up just being, like, I think, a minute shorter. [*Laughter*] So, technically, it was shorter, but it wasn't, like, as short as I was planning. But today I'm definitely going to be shorter.

Audience members. No!

The President. Yes. No, the—[*laughter*]. But whenever I give a State of the Union, I want to get out of Washington and talk to people out in the country. And so the first place I decided to

visit was Omaha. Part of the reason I wanted to come here is I've got a lot of friends, like Brad and others, and I had not been here in a while. So the last time I was here for an event in Omaha was 2008. And that year, in the primary, I won the Nebraska caucus. And there were people—I saw some signs—who called the city "Obamaha."

And then, in November of 2008, Joe Biden and I won one electoral vote here, which was—I was pretty excited about. And then, 4 years later, I got whupped all across this State. [*Laughter*] It was not pretty. It was not pretty. But I love Nebraska anyway. There's something about the Midwest and its people and the way that folks pull together and the degree to which, in this State, the kind of politics I talked about last night has always been there. There's a civility and people treating each other with respect.

And so that's part of the reason why I wanted to come back here today, because as I said last night, America is at its best when we see each other as one people: not Democrat first, not Republican first, but Americans first. That's our priority.

And that's harder to do during political season. I understand that. And you hear a bunch of folks right across the river—[*laughter*]—and I don't know if the TV ads drift over here—[*laughter*]—but they're kind of depressing. [*Laughter*] I mean, I was—I like talking about hope and all the good stuff that was going on, and then you look at some of these ads, and it's some doom and some gloom. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Four more years!

The President. It's like everybody is running around and saying America is in decline, and everything is scary, and let's find somebody to blame. And the point I wanted to make, the core thing I wanted to say last night was, that's not the spirit that brought America so far. That's not how we traveled so far. And it's not what I see every day. That's not what I see in communities and neighborhoods all across this country.

Now, what's true is, we're all living through a time of extraordinary change, and that's always a little bit unsettling. And that's what Lisa wrote to me about—at 4 a.m., which I wanted to tell Lisa, you should get some sleep. [*Laughter*] But when you have a 1-year-old, that's what happens. [*Laughter*] But you heard Lisa talk about, she was wondering whether the world she grew up in would be just as prosperous and secure for her new baby as it was for her.

But I want everybody to remember, America has been through big changes before. And each time, we overcame our fears, and we overcame our challenges. Each time, we made change work for us. And each time, we emerged stronger and better than we were before. That's what we do as Americans. I mean, we go through war and depression and all kinds of social and economic changes, but each time, we've ended up better than we were before.

Now, here's the thing, progress is not inevitable. You've got to work for it—somebody is stealing my lines up here. [*Laughter*] It's the result of the choices that we have to make together. And we've got to make some choices. Do we respond to these changes with fear and do we turn on each other, or do we face the future with confidence in who we are and what we stand for and all the incredible things we can get done together?

So I just want to repeat the four big questions that I think we have to answer as a country. And this is true whether you're a Democrat, whether you're Republican. You should think about—and we have to have good answers for—these four questions, regardless of who's President, regardless of who controls Congress.

Number one, how do we make sure that this new economy works for everybody and not just some people? That's question number one. Number two, a related question: How do we make sure that the spirit of innovation is used to solve some of our biggest challenges? Number three, how do we keep America safe and lead the world without becoming the world's policeman? Number four, and maybe most important, is how do we have a politics that reflects the best in us and not the worst?

So, on the economy, the first thing I try to remind people is, is think about where we were 7 years ago. We were—because people forget, and some of you were in grade school, and I had no gray hair. [*Laughter*] So just to refresh your memory here for a second, we were in the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes. I was going back to look at my first State of the Union Address, where I had to basically remind everybody that the money in their banks were safe. I had to tell folks that that was—that it was going to be okay. That's how fragile things were.

But to paraphrase something that a friend of mine—who, I guess, people know around here—named Warren Buffett once said, no one ever benefited by betting against America. And because of the grit and the resilience of the American people, because of hard work, because businesses got going, and because, frankly, we made some pretty good policy decisions, we now have the strongest, most durable economy in the world.

We're in the midst of the longest streak of private sector job creation in history: 14 million new jobs, around 40,000 right here in Omaha and the surrounding areas. Our national unemployment rate has been cut in half; it's down to 5 percent. It's below 3 percent here in Nebraska. So our starting point has to be, things are not terrible if your unemployment rate is at 5, and here in Omaha, it's below 3.

Now, that does not mean that things haven't been changing in profound ways. And that's also what I had to talk about. Look, it's changed to the point where even folks who have jobs, and even when the economy is growing, it's harder for hard-working families to pull themselves out of poverty. It's harder for young people to start out on their careers, especially if they've got too much student loan debt. It's tougher for workers to retire when they want to. And there's more inequality, and upward mobility has stalled. And that offends our fundamental American belief that anybody who works hard can get ahead.

So people agree that real opportunity in the new economy requires everybody gets a great education and the training they need to land a good job. And we've been working on that. Over the past 7 years, we've increased early childhood education; we've boosted high school graduation rates. We've—we're training and graduating more engineers and folks in other fields that we need to grow the economy. And—but we've got to build on that progress.

We've got to create opportunity for every child, which means pre-K for everybody. It means hands-on computer classes and math classes for the jobs of the future. It means we should recruit and support and lift up great teachers who are doing great things for our kids. And it means that no student should be priced out of a college education or loaded up with crippling debt.

So one of the things—I didn't try to list all the proposals I would like to see happen this year. That's why you go to the website: whitehouse.gov—[*laughter*]—which now works, I promise. [*Laughter*] But we should guarantee 2 years of community college at no cost for every responsible student. That's what real opportunity looks like in the new economy.

And then, once we've made sure everybody has a great education, as folks move throughout their lives, we've got to pair real opportunity with real security. Basic benefits should be just as mobile as everything else is today.

I was talking to Lisa's dad and mom. They were there, and mostly they just wanted to talk about their adorable 1-year-old grandson. [*Laughter*] But they've been married for 44 years. And dad had worked at a company that produces cement and ships it around the country, and he had worked there for 40 years, and he's still working there. And mom had been a nurse, and she'd retired. But that kind of career path, where somebody is at one place for that long, with good benefits, that—pension, health care—that's not going to be the pattern for most of the young people who are here today.

And so the idea is, how do we make sure that even if you're in this new economy where you're changing jobs, you're retraining, you're starting your own business, you have some basic security? And that's what the Affordable Care Act, by the way, is all about. That's what

it's all about. The goal wasn't to replace employer-based care. If you've got health care on the job, that's great. But if you lose your job or you have to go back to school or you want to start a new business or you're starting a new job and you've got a preexisting condition, you should have health care options. You should have health care options.

The same is true for some of the other programs that we have that haven't been adapted to this new economy. So I mentioned unemployment insurance right now. When folks lose their jobs, unemployment insurance right now is not available for a lot of folks who had been working part time or were temporary workers. And if you take a job that doesn't pay as much, sometimes, you get penalized. There should be a system of wage insurance so that you can still pay the bills and make up some of the difference as you transition into a new career.

And if we update the unemployment insurance system, that will encourage more folks to retrain for new, better paying jobs. And when they change jobs, you should be able to save for your retirement even though you didn't stay in one job for 30 years. There should be a way for you to take your retirement savings with you.

So, now, having said all that, somebody here said folks need bigger paychecks. And part of what's happened in this new economy is workers, frankly, just have less leverage, because companies move more. It means that they can offshore, they can move to a new State. It means that a lot of times they're under more severe competition. And that gets a lot of folks frustrated.

But part of what I've been concerned about as I've been listening to some of the political rhetoric is, let's make sure that we don't blame people who had nothing to do with the fact that wages aren't growing. Let's try to solve the problem, but not misidentify the problem.

So, for example, let's agree that working families will not get a bigger paycheck by us eliminating all the reforms that we made on Wall Street or by letting Big Oil and hedge funds make their own rules. That's not going to help working families.

Now, as I said last night, families on food stamps did not cause the financial crisis. We've got to reform our broken immigration system, but immigrants are not the reason wages haven't gone up. Those decisions were made in boardrooms around the country. You guys aren't the ones who were—I don't think you've got offshore accounts that allow you to dodge paying your taxes. [*Laughter*] If you do, then the IRS wants to talk about you. Might want to—[*laughter*].

But in this new economy, I believe workers, startups, small businesses, they need more of a voice, more of a say, not less. The rules should work for working Americans. And I'm going to spend some of the time this year lifting up a lot of companies who figured out if they pay good wages, provide good benefits, treat their customers well, are environmentally responsible, they can also make really good profits. And it's good for everybody. It's good for their shareholders and customers and communities.

And a lot of our best corporate citizens are our most creative. Which brings me to the second question that I raised yesterday: How do we make sure that we continue to be an innovation economy, and how do we use innovation to meet some of our biggest challenges?

Some of you heard me talk about our space program. Sixty years ago, the Russians beat us to space. And how did we respond? We didn't go, "Oh, my God, America is in decline, and we're doomed." [*Laughter*] We didn't say, "Ah, that's not actually a spaceship up there, that's a comet." [*Laughter*] We didn't argue about the science, we didn't shrink our R&D budget. We built a space program almost overnight. Twelve years later, we were walking on the Moon. Right?

I think my favorite movie last year was "The Martian." And I like space, but there was one line Matt Damon delivered where he said, I'm just going to science the heck out of this. [*Laughter*] He didn't say "heck," but you get the point. [*Laughter*] But that's the American spirit, right? "Okay, let's solve the problem." Sometimes, they're tough problems, but we can figure this out. We can figure this out.

That's the spirit we need today. That's why I put Joe Biden in charge of us figuring out how to cure cancer. He's working with scientists and doctors, and obviously, with families who've been affected, because he knows what they've gone through.

That's why we've got to make sure that American businesses produce and sell the energy of the future. We should keep pressing forward with the clean energies that's going to be creating new jobs for decades to come and transition from dirty energy. We shouldn't be subsidizing the past, we should invest in the future. That puts us ahead of the curve.

And that's how we're going to keep leading the world to combat climate change and protect this planet, Lisa's son, your kids, and your grandkids. There's nothing more important than making sure that future generations are able to enjoy the incredible bounty that God's given us.

Third question: How do we keep America safe and strong without either isolating ourselves or trying to nation-build all over the world?

Audience member. Keeping you as President!

The President. Oh, well, I can't do that. I can't do that because of the Constitution. And I can't do that because Michelle would kill me. [*Laughter*]

But look, just as all this talk about how the American economy is terrible is just not true, it's also not true when you hear folks talking about how America is so weak. We aren't just the strongest economy in the world, we are far and away the most powerful nation on the planet. Nobody can match our troops. Nobody can match what we can do to mobilize to solve problems around the world.

And when I said that, by the way, last night, it was strange that some in the Chamber didn't agree and applaud with that. I mean, that's kind of a weird thing. I didn't say that it's the strongest in the world because of me. I mean, I understand why they wouldn't want to give me credit for it—which is true. [*Laughter*] It's because the United States of America, for 250, you know, years—[*laughter*]—has been working to make us the strongest.

But that should not be a controversial statement, right? I mean, we can all clap about that. But that's how crazy our politics has gotten sometimes. Right? That's how crazy our politics has gotten, where we now feel obliged to not root for America doing good.

So when you hear people peddling this fiction about our enemies getting stronger, America getting weaker; when you hear folks say we can solve challenges just by looking meaner and talking tougher or carpet bombing wherever we want—that's just hot air. It's bluster. It's not serious. [*Applause*] It's not serious. There's another word for it that starts with a "B"—it's baloney. [*Laughter*]

Now, because we're the strongest nation, we've got choices to make about how we use our power. Priority number one is protecting the American people and going after terrorist networks. That's what we're doing with ISIL. And for more than a year, America has led a coalition of more than 60 countries. We're cutting off their financing. We're disrupting their plots. We're stopping the flow of terrorist fighters. We're stamping out their ideology. We've had 10,000 airstrikes. We're taking out their leadership, their oil, their training camps, their weapons. And they will learn the same lesson that terrorists before them have learned, which is when you come after Americans, we go after you. And it may take time, but our reach has no limits, and we will get you. [*Applause*] We'll get you.

But our foreign policy has to also have judgment and wisdom. And we can't try to take over and rebuild every country that falls into a crisis. So what I suggested last night is, we have to have a patient and disciplined strategy. It's got to use every element of our national power. It says America will always act, alone if necessary, to protect our people and our allies. But on a lot of world problems, from climate change to Ebola to Iran trying to get a nuclear weapon, we'll mobilize the world to work with us, and we make sure other countries pull their own weight so we're not ending up sending our troops and spending our money every time there's a problem around the world. That's not a lack of leadership, that's common sense.

That's how we led 200 nations to forge the most ambitious agreement in history to fight climate change. That's how we've gotten Iran to roll back its nuclear program. They're shipping out their nuclear materials right now.

That's how we dealt with the Ebola crisis. Our troops, our doctors, our development workers—all outstanding, great courage—they set up the logistics in West Africa so that other countries could then come in. You had Chinese planes who couldn't land before, because of our military setting up the landing strip, could then come in and support the effort to stamp out the spread of Ebola.

And we couldn't be prouder of the doctors and nurses, including here at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, who heroically treated and cared for patients. They saved lives not just here, but their courage saved lives around the world, because they showed that, you know what, we can deal with this. It's a problem; it's serious. We're going to "science the heck out of it." [*Laughter*] And as a consequence, hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of people's lives were saved. That's how America leads. That's the strength of our values. That's the power of our example.

And that's why we have to reject any politics—any politics—that targets people because of their race or their religion. That we have to reject. [*Applause*] That we have to reject. That we've got no room for.

And I want to be clear about this. This is not about being politically correct. Now, since I'm on a college campus, I'll tell you, sometimes, I understand the argument about political correctness. There are times where folks don't want to hear something and they just shut things down. If somebody doesn't agree with affirmative action, that's a legitimate policy difference. That doesn't mean they're racist. If somebody has a disagreement about my economic policies, we can have a discussion about that. There should never be a situation on college campuses, for example, where people can't speak at all. Right? The First Amendment is important. The First Amendment is valuable. So we do have to be cautious about suggesting that anytime somebody says something, we shut them down.

But let me say this. That doesn't mean that you go around insulting people and thinking that that is clever, or that is being honest, or telling it straight. No, that's just being offensive. And that's feeding some of our worst impulses. And that does not make us strong. That doesn't make us strong. And that doesn't help us fight terrorism, by the way.

When politicians insult Muslims, including Muslim Americans—including Muslim Americans who are in uniform, fighting on our behalf—when a mosque is vandalized or a kid is bullied, that doesn't make us safer. It doesn't make us safer. The overwhelming majority of Muslim Americans and Muslims around the world, they're our greatest allies in fighting this scourge of terrorism. So it doesn't make us stronger. It doesn't help the effort. It is wrong. And it betrays who we are as a country: one people, who rise and fall together.

And that is—and when I think back to the arc of my entire political career, that's one thing that I believe more firmly than anything: the fact that we are in this together. That's what makes America great.

Brad—on the flight over here, Brad was telling me about his grandfather. So his grandfather was from Sweden. And there—here in the Midwest, we've got some folks of Swedish extraction. [*Laughter*] And he was telling me about how his grandfather helped to set up an organization that was pretty well known at the time, back in the thirties and forties, that was critical in fighting anti-Semitism and helping to bring Jews who were escaping Hitler and Nazi Germany. And I thought about Brad's grandfather as just one example of all the stories in the history of this country that have made us the envy of the world, that have made us that "shining city on a hill."

It's not just that we've got a big military. It's not just that we've got a great economy. It's that, in fits and starts, we figured out that if you treat everybody with respect and you give everybody a shot and everybody is working together, everybody is better off, everybody is stronger, everybody's religion is protected.

Everybody's point of view is heard. And that's what we have to remember.

And that's the last question that we have to answer and the most important one: How do we infuse those principles into our politics? And I said this yesterday, and I meant it. I have really enjoyed being President, and I'm going to squeeze every last thing I can get out of it over this next year. But look, probably my only big regret is that our parties are even more polarized, our politics are even more rancorous than they were 7 years ago. Now, I'm going to keep on trying to do better to see if I can help break the fever here. But it's not going to happen unless the American people send a clear message to their elected officials that that's not the kind of politics we want.

And there are some—and I can—[*applause*]. Look, I can say this as somebody who is never going to be on the ballot again—[*laughter*]—there are some institutional things we've got to fix. I think we have to end political gerrymandering, so that Congressmen aren't choosing their own voters. Because that divides people. If you've got a congressional district that's 80-percent Democrat or 80-percent Republican, then you don't feel obliged to talk to people who don't agree with you, and that's a problem.

I think we have to end the just crazy amounts of money, much of it hidden, that is in our political system right now.

I believe that there should not be a single State in which we're making it harder for people to vote instead of easier. That doesn't make any sense. I—we're not supposed to be a nation in which we discourage people from participating. This country works by encouraging people to have a voice in their government, which means that one of the things that I'm going to do over the course of this year is talk about why is it that we should have a single mom who's got—a nurse, let's say, just like Lisa's mom was—she might have to take public transportation, get up early, go to her job, fix breakfast, now she's got to pick up the kid or drop off the kid, come home. And she's got to vote on a Tuesday. Why wouldn't we want to make it so that she's got a little more time to vote? Why are we making it impossible for her?

And a lot of States are doing it. A lot of States are doing it. But that's how it should be in every State. Because none of these things that I just talked about can happen just by a President saying so—any President. Whoever replaces me is not going to be able to get all that done unless the American people demand it; when we as citizens demand it.

That's what I said back in 2008. I didn't say, "Yes, I can," I said "Yes, we can." I asked you not to believe in my ability to bring about change, I asked to believe in your ability to bring about change.

And as I said last night, I know it's hard. Sometimes, it's frustrating. But if we don't accept that responsibility and that privilege of citizenship and we accept the cynicism that says, ah, change can't happen, and politics is pointless, and our voices and our actions don't matter, then we're going to forsake a better future, and the void will be filled by folks with money and power and special interests. And they're going to gain more and more control over decisions about whether young people are being sent to war. They will be unfettered in pursuing policies that might lead to another economic crisis. They might roll back rights that generations of American fought to secure.

And then, when people get more and more frustrated because things don't change, you start hearing voices that urge us to fall back into our respective tribes and start scapegoating our fellow citizens: people who don't look like us or pray like us or vote like we do or share the same background. We can't go down that path.

So, Omaha, whatever you believe—whether you are a Democrat or a Republican or you don't believe in political parties, whether you supported me or you didn't—our collective future depends on your willingness to uphold your obligation as citizens: to vote and to speak out and to stand up for others, especially those who are vulnerable, especially those who need help, knowing that we are only here because somebody else did that for us. That's how all of us are here.

And when we do that, we will see the goodness and the decency and the optimism of people like Lisa reflecting itself in Washington. That's what we're fighting for.

And I know it's there because I see it in the American people every day. I see it every day. I see it in all the students—first-generation college students—working hard and scrimping and saving and eating ramen—[*laughter*]—and then eating some more ramen, just to get ahead. And you've got teachers like Lisa, who come in early and are helping young people cultivate a passion or master a new skill that can change their lives. And then, you've got parents who are volunteering at local schools, not just to help out their own kids, but to help out their neighborhood's kids. And folks coaching Little League. And businesses who are doing the right thing by their employees. And folks who are fighting on our behalf halfway around the world and their families who are sacrificing alongside them. And folks working to help our veterans after they've been served. Big-hearted, optimistic people, they're everywhere: in coffee shops and churches all across Nebraska and in Louisiana and in New York and in Arizona and every place else. Folks whose spirit has built America.

That's why I'm hopeful about our future: because of you, the American people. Because of folks like all of you, I am absolutely confident that we're going to get to where we need to go and America will remain the greatest country on Earth.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless Nebraska.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:32 p.m. in Baxter Arena. In his remarks, he referred to Papillion, NE, resident Lisa Martin, her husband Jeff Martin, their son Cooper, and her parents Ora and Rebecca Hutchinson; and Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Hall Meeting at McKinley Senior High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana
January 14, 2016

The President. Hello, Louisiana! Hello, Baton Rouge! Geaux Tigers! For those of you who are not aware, that's a "geaux" with an "x." I've got it.

Can everybody give Che a big round of applause? We are—we could not be more proud of her. I was backstage; I asked her, "Are you nervous?" She said, "No, I've got this." [*Laughter*] "I'm fine." That is a serious leader of the future. And we are so proud of her. And I want to thank everybody at McKinley for hosting us today.

There are a couple of people I want to make sure we acknowledge. Your mayor, Kip Holden, is in the house. [*Applause*] There he is. We've got Congressman Cedric Richmond here, who's got a really cute little boy. [*Laughter*] And New Orleans Mayor and great friend of mine, Mitch Landrieu is in the house, whose son is not so little, but it—looks pretty cool. [*Laughter*] I want to congratulate your new Governor who's going to do outstanding work. John Bel Edwards is in the house and his lovely family. We are so grateful to have them here.

Since LSU has a pretty good sports team—sports teams, historically, I thought I might mention you've got an okay basketball player named Ben Simmons in the house, so—[*applause*]—who, he—his dad played in Australia with my Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan. So they can hoop. But I think they would both acknowledge that Ben is better. [*Laughter*] And it's wonderful to have him here.

Now, it is my intention not to give a long speech, because this is sort of a town hall. I want to spend a little time having a conversation with all of you. And—but I do want to make mention of what your incoming Governor is already doing. He is already delivering for the people of Louisiana. This week, he took

the bold and wise step to expand Medicaid to cover hundreds of thousands of hard-working Louisianans, providing them with the financial security of health care. It was the right thing to do. And by the way, it will actually help the State's finances. And it shows you why elections matter.

And right now we're hoping to encourage more States to do the right thing. One of the ways we're doing that is proposing additional funding to support new States that choose, as John did, to expand Medicaid. So I'm very—I'm just so proud of him, and I'm confident that he's going to do great work. [*Applause*] He's going to do great work. And everybody here needs to get behind him because it's not going to be easy. He's coming in a little like I came in, sort of, got to clean up some stuff.

Now, I love Louisiana. I love Baton Rouge, but this is the first time I've been here as President. I've been trying to pack all my fun trips into my last year. And although I missed the Tigers beating Ole Miss last night, maybe I'll come back for football season.

Some of you know I gave my final State of the Union Address this week. I focused on the fact that we're going through a time of extraordinary change. And that's unsettling. It can seem sometimes, especially during political season, where everybody is running around saying, "Oh, everything is terrible, and let's find somebody to blame," that our politics won't meet the moment. But what I want folks to know—that's right, if you have a chair, go ahead and sit down. [*Laughter*] If you don't have a chair, don't sit down. [*Laughter*] I don't want you falling down. Good thing—whoever the first one was who did that, you're a leader. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. We love you!

The President. Love you back. Thank you.

But what I want people to know is, is that we've been through big changes before. And America always comes out stronger and better, as long as we make decisions together that are designed to seize the future instead of run away from it. And we're uniquely positioned to do that. We've got the strongest economy in the world. We've gone through the worst economic crisis of our lifetime, and we have bounced back with 14 million new jobs, cut the unemployment rate in half. We're the most powerful country on Earth, capable of meeting any threat. Our commitment to science and education and entrepreneurship and our diversity make us a perfect match for what's needed in this new century.

But our progress is not inevitable. So we've got to answer some big questions. Number one, how do we make sure that we create an economy where everybody is benefiting, everybody feels secure, everybody has a shot at success, not just some? That's question number one. Question number two: How do we make sure we've got an innovation economy and we embrace science and reason and facts, instead of running away from it? Number three, how do we make sure that we keep America safe, not through trying to talk tough, but by being smart? Number four, how do we make sure our politics works, not in a way where everybody agrees—because in a big country like ours, people aren't going to agree on everything—but so that it is civil and so that it is constructive and so that we can work together to find solutions to the problems that are not just going to face us, but our kids and our grandkids? All right?

Now, I tried to give you a sense of how I think we need to answer those questions going forward, but I promised I wasn't going to talk long because I want to have a chance to hear from you. I just want to make this point. We're pretty close to New Orleans, and I had a chance to go back and travel with Mitch as we were commemorating the anniversary of Katrina. And if you have any doubt about America's capacity to overcome anything, you just visit some of those neighborhoods, and you talk to some of those families, and you see the businesses that are thriving and the homes that have been built and the parishes that have pulled together.

And it's just a reminder of the fact that when we work together, we cannot be stopped. We cannot be stopped. We work best as a team. And it is my ardent hope that, during the course of this year, as long as I have this extraordinary privilege to be your President, that

I'm going to be able to encourage more and more of you to get involved and feel that optimism and confidence about where America is headed. All right?

So with that, let's start this conversation. And we—let me say this. We've got mikes in the audience. And we're going to go boy, girl, boy, girl, so it's fair. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]—girl, boy, girl, boy.

The President. And—or girl, boy, girl, boy. That's fine. See—[*laughter*].

Audience member. Girl, girl, girl!

The President. [*Laughter*] She said, "Girl, girl, girl." Now, that's not fair. [*Laughter*] Come on. [*Laughter*]

So what I'm going to do is, people just raise their hands, I will call on you. A couple things: Wait until the mike gets there. Number two, introduce yourself so we know who you are. Number three, if you keep your question relatively—or comment relatively short, then my response, I can't guarantee I'll keep it short, but I'll keep it shorter. And that way, we have a chance to hear from more people. All right?

Okay, so let's see who's going to go first. Where's my mike? Here we go. All right, I'll—let's see. This is a good-looking crowd too. I'm—oh, I don't know who to call on. That young lady right there in the brown jacket. Right there. Yes, you.

Q. I want to ask you—my name is Rachel——

The President. Okay, hold on. Wait for the mike. You didn't follow instructions. You're already—[*laughter*]—careful. Careful. She didn't go to McKinley, is that what happened?

Q. No, I didn't. [*Laughter*]

The President. All right, go ahead, go ahead.

Q. My name is Rachel. I'm from Texas. And my question—I don't have one—I just wanted to tell you thank you.

The President. Oh, okay, well, that's sweet. [*Laughter*] All right, the—well, she just—she didn't really have a question, so I'm going to go back to—I'm going to go to this young lady right here in the black-and-white jacket. Right there. Hold on a second. The mike is coming to you. It's just that we're so packed in, it may take—you can go ahead and pass her the mike. She looks like she'll give it back.

The President's Plans After Leaving Office

Q. Hi, Mr. President. My name is Jasmine Elliott, and I am a 10th grade cheerleader here at McKinley High School.

The President. Yay, all right! Go Panthers!

Q. And I love you—me and my family love you so much. And I want to thank you.

The President. Oh, that's sweet.

Q. And as a future broadcast journalist, I would like to ask you two questions.

The President. Okay.

Q. My first question is: What are your plans to do when you leave office?

The President. Okay.

Q. And can you please give my grandmother a hug? [*Laughter*]

The President. See, now first of all, I know your grandma put you up to that. [*Laughter*] So I will give your grandma a hug because you did such a nice job asking the question.

In terms of my plans, look, I've got so much work to do this next year that, I—Michelle and I, we haven't had a chance to really step back and think about it. But as I said at the State of Union, when I get out, I'm still holding the most important job in a democracy, and that is the office of citizen. So I will continue to work on the things that Michelle and I care so deeply about. We want to encourage young people to get involved. We want to improve education. We want to make sure that our criminal justice system works the way it should. We want to make sure that we are promoting science education and learning. So—we want to work internationally to help other countries develop.

So we're going to have a busy agenda, but I'm not overthinking that right now because I've got a whole bunch of stuff to do between now and next year. All right? But thank you for the question.

All right, it's a gentleman's turn. This man, because he's got such a sharp bowtie. Right here. Yes, all right. Go ahead.

Q. Good morning.

The President. Good morning.

Q. This is a pleasure, sir.

The President. Thank you.

Political Polarization/Political Participation/Bipartisanship/Criminal Justice Reform/Tax Reform

Q. My name Tremaine Sterling. I'm from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Through your entire two terms as President, what would be your biggest regret and why?

The President. I think that is a great question. Although, had you been watching my State of the Union on Tuesday—[*laughter*]—he might have known that I actually already answered that question. [*Laughter*] But that's okay. I'm sure there was a good ballgame on that night. [*Laughter*]

No, what I told the country—except for you—[*laughter*]—was that my biggest regret was the fact that politics has become more rancorous during my Presidency and more polarized than it was when I came in. And keep in mind, when I ran, my belief was that there were no red States and blue States. There wasn't a Black or White or Latino America. There was a United States of America. And that continues to be my belief.

Now, I have, as President, obviously done soul searching about, what are things I could do differently to help bridge some of those divides? I think part of it had to with when I came in we had a real emergency and we had to act quickly. And people in Washington sometimes weren't always as focused on getting the job done as they were, how is this going to position us for future elections?

And—but I—as I said at the State of Union, I have no doubt that there are things I could have done better. But what I also say is that, this is not something a President can do by him- or herself. When it comes to how we work together, the main impetus for a better politics is going to be the American people. They have to demand it.

And so if we have voters who are not getting involved, then the people who tend to determine the agenda are the special interests or money or power or the loudest voices or the most polarizing voices, because a lot of folks—some of the best people—they're just sitting at home. And they're getting cynical about politics, and they don't get involved. And then, the people who do get involved end up being the folks who aren't willing to work together.

It's important for voters to insist that their elected officials are strong on principle, but also are willing to compromise with people who don't agree with them. And if you punish an elected official for even talking to the other side, then it's going to produce the kind of politics that we have seen in Washington too often.

So this is an area where I regret. I'm going to keep on working at it, try to see what more we can do to reach across the aisle to get things done. I said on Tuesday that I think at the end of last year, maybe we surprised the cynics by getting a budget done. And we extended tax cuts for working families that were due to expire. And we were able to continue funding for transportation. I know that your mayor was talking about how the interstate here narrows, and we may need to do something about it to relieve some traffic. And those things are not things that should be subject to a lot of Republican and Democratic argument. Maybe that's something that we can carry over into this year.

One area, for example, that there's been genuine bipartisan interest and support is the idea that we've got to reform our criminal justice system; that we have to be tough on violent crime, but also be smart when we think about, how can we prevent young people from getting into the criminal justice system in the first place? How can we provide alternatives for low-level, nonviolent drug offenders? How can we make sure that the sentencing is proportional? How do we make sure that we're training folks while they're incarcerated to get a skill that would allow them to be gainfully employed? How do we make sure that when they are released that there is a transition process for them? How do we lift up all the outstanding employers who are willing to give people second chances? So there's a whole slew of work that we could be doing there.

And it—to their credit, we've seen some very conservative Republicans and some very liberal Democrats sitting down at the table and

trying to work it out. And that's an example of where we see some promise.

Another area is—and I mentioned this at the State of the Union—some of you have heard of the earned-income tax credit. Now, this is a program historically that is supported by Democrats and Republicans. And it's a pretty simple idea. If you work, you shouldn't be in poverty. And so we should provide tax breaks to low-income working families so that they don't say, "I might as well just be on welfare because I'll get more benefits than if I'm working."

Well, the earned-income tax credit creates an incentive to say, you work hard, you're working full time, but it's, say, a minimum-wage job, we're going to give you a chance, if you've got kids, to raise that income level, get a tax break.

The problem is that it does not apply to individuals without children. And that means a lot of men in that category don't benefit and young people don't benefit. And one of the things we've been talking about is, if we expand that to reach workers who don't have children but are also working hard and are in poverty, that could be helpful.

And these are areas where Cedric—who has—he's been a leader on criminal justice reform. He's working on this as well. I know that Mitch has been doing great work when it comes to the criminal justice system in New Orleans. These are the kinds of areas where just common sense can prevail if we've all got a spirit of trying to solve problems instead of just winning elections. Okay? All right.

Okay, it's a young lady's turn. Okay. You know what, I'm going to call on that little young lady right there. Yes. She's in her daddy's lap. And my daughter—my oldest daughter is about to go to college next year. And I can't really talk about it a lot because I start to cry. [*Laughter*]

Cancer Research

Q. My name is Noelle Remeny. And I'm in the fourth grade, and I'm 10 years old. And do you think there's going to be a cure for cancer?

The President. Well, there you go. Are you interested in math and science?

Q. A little bit.

The President. A little bit? [*Laughter*] Well, I tell you what, it's going to be young people like you that are going to help cure cancer. So you better study up on your math and study up on your science.

But I do think that we are seeing medical breakthroughs right now that we have not seen in my lifetime. Part of the reason is because—some of you heard of the Human Genome Project. What happens is that we're now able to look at not just how cells work, but we're actually able to track how individual DNA and genetics operates. And when you do that, it turns out that a cancer cell that I have may be different than a cancer cell that John or somebody else has and may require different cures. And certain treatments might work better than other treatments. And because we're able to get into the really nitty-gritty of how our bodies work, in ways that we haven't before, we're starting to see more effective treatments.

But we have to make a big investment. And my Vice President, Joe Biden, who I love, suffered the kind of tragedy last year that is unbelievable. And he managed it with grace. His son Beau Biden was one of the finest men I knew. And so I thought it was entirely appropriate for Joe Biden, who has seen this and gone through it, to lead this effort like a Moon launch. We're going to double down on medical research. We're going to look at the best—we're going to gather the best researchers, the best scientists, and we are going to go after this thing.

It probably won't be cured in my lifetime. But I think it will be cured in yours. And that's why we've got to get started now. All right?

Okay, it is a gentleman's turn. This gentleman back here. Right there. Yes, sir, the—you. [*Laughter*] Hold on. The mike is coming. The mike is coming.

First Lady Michelle Obama

Q. Mr. President, first of all, I'm Greg Gavins. I'm the proud father of one of your special, great Secret Service.

The President. Outstanding.

Q. I have a question for you. Since you can't run again for another term, is there any way that we as a group can talk the First Lady into running?

The President. No. [*Laughter*] No, no, no. No, no.

Audience member. I know that's right. I know that's right. [*Laughter*]

The President. Let me tell you, there are three things that are certain in life. [*Laughter*] Death, taxes, and Michelle is not running for President. [*Laughter*] That I can tell you.

But you know what, the First Lady, though—the work she's done around reducing childhood obesity, the work that she and Jill Biden have done on military families and making sure they get support, I could not be prouder of her. And I am certain that she's going to be really active as a First Lady.

Not only is she going to be a very young ex-First Lady, but unlike me, she looks young. [*Laughter*] I was looking at a wedding picture—actually, we found the old video from our wedding. We've been married 23 years now. And so my mother-in-law had been going through some storage stuff and found the—our wedding video. And I popped it in—and I look like a teenager—and realized, boy, I sure have aged. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I know that though. [*Laughter*] But Michelle looked—she looked identical. Looked identical.

Q. We're proud of her.

The President. Well, I'm proud of her too, because most importantly, she's been an unbelievable mom, which is why my daughters turned out so well.

So, all right, it is a young woman's turn. This young lady right here. Go ahead. Yes, you. Yes, you've been raising your hand. [*Laughter*] Okay. But hold on, mike is coming. Go ahead.

Environment/Climate Change

Q. Hi, my name is Imani Maxberry. I'm a coastal environmental science major at LSU.

The President. Outstanding.

Q. One, I want to say thank you for rejecting the Keystone pipeline. And two, I want to ask: While you've been in office, what environmental impact do you—what environmental issue do you think has impacted you the most and should be more brought to the public?

The President. Okay. The—that's a great question, and I'm proud that you're doing that work. That's important.

First of all, it's important for us to understand how much environmental progress we've made in my lifetime. And the reason is, sometimes, when we talk about the environment, it sounds like something far away. But we don't realize—we don't remember what we've accomplished already.

In the 1970s, in California, there would be regular days where people did not go outside. When Ronald Reagan was Governor in California, there were regularly days where the smog was so bad, it was like it is in Beijing now. People just wouldn't go outside. And if you had asthma or some respiratory disease, you might die.

I remember as recently as 1979, when I first started college—I started college in Los Angeles—and when I went running, the first week I was there, after about 5 minutes, I'd start feeling a burning in my chest. And it was just me sucking in soot and smog. And now you go there, and that smog isn't there. And the reason is because we instituted things like catalytic converters and unleaded gasoline. And we changed the technologies to reduce smog.

It used to be that places like the Cuyahoga River in—around Cleveland caught fire it was so polluted. Caught fire. No, this is no joke. And now you go there, and people are able to use it. Same thing with the Chicago River. Now people are kayaking and fishing.

And so the point is, is that we actually can make progress when we make an effort because of our technology and our innovation. And a lot—every time we've made—taken a step to try to clean up our air or our water or our environment, there are all kinds of people who say this is going to kill jobs, we can't afford it, can't do it, it's going to cost too much. And then, after we do it, we look back and say, you

know, that didn't cost as much as we thought, it happened quicker than we did. Our businesses figured out how to do it and to make money doing it at the same time. What a—that's what I mean when I say an innovation economy. We've got to be confident about our ability to solve any problem if we put our minds to it.

So now, the answer to your question right now is, what I am very much concerned about is climate change. And I—there are folks who are still denying that this is a problem or that we can do anything about it. Look, if 99 doctors told you that you have diabetes—[*laughter*]—and you need to change your eating habits and get some exercise and lose some weight, you may decide not to do it because you're stubborn. But don't say they're wrong because the science in unsure. This is happening. And by the way, if you live in Louisiana, you should especially be concerned about this because you are right next to some water that has a tendency to heat up, and that then creates hurricanes. And as oceans ride, that means that the amount of land that is getting gobbled up continuously in this State is shrinking—the land mass—and it's going to have an impact.

Now, we can build things, and we can fortify things, and we can do things smarter, and we can control how development happens, and we can restore wetlands. All those things make a difference. But ultimately, we've got to do something about making sure that ocean levels don't rise 4, 5, 6, 8 feet, because if they do, this State is going to have some big problems—bigger problems.

So what we've done is, we've gotten together with 200 other nations, American leadership, to say all of us have to start bringing down the carbon pollution that we send in the atmosphere. And here in the United States, there are two main ways we can do that. Number one is our power plants; we've got to start using cleaner energy. Number two, we've got to start promoting solar and wind, which create jobs. And we're a leader in this technology as long as we start investing in it.

And that transition from old, dirty fuels to clean fuels, that's going to be tough. A lot of people make money in the coal industry, for example. A lot of people have worked there, historically. But now you actually have more people working in solar than you do in coal. Those communities that are reliant on coal, we should help them get a jump on making money in wind power and solar power. Those are hard-working, good people. Let's not have them stuck in old jobs that are going to be slowly declining. Let's get them in the new jobs that are going to be going up.

And then, in our transportation sector, we need to continue to build on the things we've done since I've been President: doubling fuel efficiency standards on cars, promoting electric cars. All this stuff adds up. And the good new is, businesses can succeed, and we can make money doing it at the same time. But don't think that this is not a problem for all of us. This is the main message I have. We talked—that young lady was asking about curing cancer—well, we might cure cancer, but if temperatures have gone up 2, 3 degrees around the planet, 4 degrees, and oceans are rising, we've got—we're going to have more problems than medical science can cure. We've got to make that investment now. And we can do it.

All right. Good question. This gentleman right here. Hold on, I've got a mike right there. How you doing?

Q. I can hold it.

The President. Go ahead.

Government Efficiency/Department of Veterans Affairs/The President's Legislative Agenda

Q. I'm a big kid. [*Laughter*] Well, maybe I'm not a big kid. Okay. My name is Alan Tura, from near Youngstown, Ohio. You've been there many times in helping with the steel mills get back on track. That's all good. And in your defense, my business is doing good, making money, growing for the last 10 years. And I've got a lot of friends that have businesses; they're doing real well too. So for a lot of people that are complaining, there's a lot of people doing well. So I think if you hustle, you can make good.

The President. Absolutely.

Q. But my question to you is, you're on your last year—is there any one big thing that you'd like to see happen before you leave the office?

The President. Good. The—well, first of all, what's your business?

Q. Well, I've got a couple of businesses. I manufacture Halloween props, and I own a haunted house and hay ride in Lordstown, Ohio, which you've been there many times, to the car plant.

The President. I've been, yes.

Q. It's called Fear Forest. Maybe if you make it back into Youngstown in October, you can come check it out. But I make Halloween props, and I like to scare people.

The President. [*Laughter*] So that's kind of interesting. That's fun. The—you sell a lot of Obama masks? [*Laughter*]

Q. Hey, Obama is not scary. So——

The President. There you go, all right. I don't think so.

I—the things that I talked about in the State of the Union are all things that I think are possible. Some of them I can get done on my own. So I'll give you a couple of examples.

We need to revamp how our information systems, our IT systems in Government work. This is one of the areas where we're—there's a biggest gap between Government and the private sector is—if you just want to order a pizza, you've got your smartphone and you just—and the pizza shows up. Yes, you want to buy an airline ticket, you punch in a couple things and suddenly if you go to the airport it's all printing out. And the systems in Government are really old.

Now, that causes two problems. Number one is, they're less safe and secure than they should be because they're old. They're outdated systems. So it's easier for folks to try to hack into them, break into them, and we're constantly putting patches up.

The second thing is, it just means that things are slower for customers. And I want to make sure Government is in the 21st century, and we're systematically going agency through agency. If you want to get a small business loan from the SBA, I want you to be able to go to one website, in English, be able to figure out what you need to do, apply online, get that money, start that business, put people to work. And right now we're continually trying to streamline that process.

And we've made some good progress. But that's an example of something that we can do administratively. The same is true, by the way, for the VA. You'll remember—we are so proud of our veterans and our young men and women who served. And we've got some folks here looking sharp in uniform that we are grateful for their service. And we have put more resources and provided more support to—and increased budgets for the VA than any administration in history. We have cut backlogs. We included folks who had been affected by agent orange. We have boosted the resources available for folks suffering from PTSD. We are ending veterans' homelessness. We've made some huge investments, made really good progress.

But you'll remember that story that came out last year, or a year and a half ago, in Phoenix, where folks were waiting so long to try to get an appointment that—and many of these were elderly, aging folks, and they were dying before they got an appointment. And it was unacceptable.

When we did an investigation of what had happened—and what was worse was some of the administrators there were hiding what was going on and manipulating, sort of, records in ways that meant they had to be fired. But when you looked at what was going on, a lot of it had to do with the fact that they had a system where a veteran would call in trying to get an appointment, somebody was writing it down on paper, then they were tapping it into some 30-year-old computer system that would then print out something that then would get walked over to someplace, that then they'd have to match—it was a mess. And so we've had to make big investments in trying to clean up that whole process. So that's what we can do without Congress.

Some things I think we can do with Congress, I've already mentioned. I think we can get criminal justice reform passed. I think that we can potentially do some work on what I just

identified, the earned-income tax credit, that would help millions of people around the country who are working hard get out of poverty. And on the issue of medicine, I think that we're seeing some bipartisan work to try to bring together all the resources we have around these new medical breakthroughs that could potentially, not just affect things like cancer, but also Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, and a lot of diseases that people suffer from. It's a good story, and it's not as politically controversial as some other issues.

Now, there are some things I'd love to do, like raising the minimum wage all—for everybody. I'd love to get immigration reform passed. But I'm realistic that Congress probably will not act on some of those more controversial issues. That's where people are going to have to make a decision in this election. That's what elections are about. You've got to decide which direction America needs to go in.

Okay, let's see. These folks have been neglected, so I've got to pay them a little attention here. It's a young lady's turn. Well, you've got a beautiful dress on. Let's just call on you. There you go.

Criminal Justice Reform

Q. Mr. President, I'm Judge Trudy M. White, and I'm the district court judge here in the 19th judicial district court.

The President. Good to see you, Judge.

Q. I am also the reentry court judge for our parish. And I did notice when you spoke at the State of the Union, you made your address, that the first issue that you did address was criminal justice reform. I'd like to know, as a reentry court judge, what incentives could you offer our Governor—our new Governor and Governors across the United States, that would provide opportunities for felons who are returning as they exit the criminal justice system?

The President. Well, Judge, you probably know more than I do. [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, can my people get with your people to get those incentives down here? [*Laughter*]

The President. Absolutely. I'll have my people call your people. [*Laughter*]

Q. All right.

The President. But I will tell you what I know I've seen with my own eyes.

I was in Camden with a fellow Federal district court judge who had taken—who had worked with the U.S. attorney there to supplement some of the reentry programs that were already there with some grants. And this judge, she's a wonderful woman, just like you. And she had this terrific lead probation officer. And together, what they had done is just made sure that anybody who got released, the day they were out, they were getting a call from the probation officer. And the probation officer was saying, all right, what do you need? Do you need clothes? What are you doing in terms of a place to stay? How are you going to think about getting your résumé together? Do you have an alarm clock? Just basic stuff. How are you going to get around?

Because so often, what happens is, these young people are getting released, and they're just dropped off in the neighborhood where they were. Oftentimes, part of the reason they got down a wrong path in the first place is the mom and dad might not have been there, or they might have moved by now, and so they're literally all alone.

And so this young man who was there, who had gone through this process, he had been arrested when he was 17 and had a record that accumulated, then arrested at 27, spent 10 years in Federal prison, was released at 37. And he really decided, I want to change my life. He had a spiritual awakening. And he started just pounding the pavement and got a job at a fast food place. And he was describing what it was like. He had been doing this about 3 months, and he still didn't have enough money for rent, and the halfway house that he was staying at, it was about to kick him out because they only have a certain number of slots, and you don't stay there long enough.

And he was saying how his old friends, the drug dealers and the gang bangers who he had used to run with, they would come up every once in a while, and he'd be sitting there in his uniform serving—flipping burgers and serving food, and they'd be talking to him: "Hey, man, any time you're ready. That—those are the

only clothes you've got? Those are the same shoes we saw you in 10 years ago; these are the—this is the new style." And that temptation for him was powerful.

Now, this is where a well-designed reentry program comes in, because what happened was, the judge, the probation officer, they worked with him, signed him up. The judge, unfortunately, because the program didn't have a lot of money, had to basically do a collection, dig into her own pocket. But they got the fees to have him go study at a community college to be an emergency medical technician. And he ended up graduating from this class, working for a private health firm, and then, by the time he was sitting next to me 3 or 4 years later, or maybe 5 years later, he's now working for the county as an EMT, fully trained, saving lives.

But the point is that it required intensive intervention and support and help, but what a smart investment that was. Because if we spent whatever it cost during those 1, 2, 3 years of transition to help that person get their life straight, we might have just saved ourselves another 10 years or 15 years or 20 years of incarcerating him on taxpayer expense.

So it made me realize that if we really want to be smart on crime—you've got, let's say, a maximum minimum sentence—mandatory minimum sentence of 20 years for some drug-related charge—if we reduced the amount of time that they're incarcerated, took all those savings and we took just some of that for 1, 2 years of reentry programs that are highly supervised, then we're going to get better results—safer streets, better citizens—because he's now paying taxes as an EMT instead of taking taxes as a ward of the State. Less violence. More hope. He's got an opportunity now to be a father, as opposed to an absent presence in a child's life. That's how we rebuild communities. And that's why this is such a promising area.

And as I said, I want to make sure to acknowledge, this is an area where there's been some really powerful bipartisan, interesting coalitions. I think the evangelical community, because they have a lot of strong prison ministries, they care about this, they believe in redemption and second chances. And so they've gotten involved. And you've got libertarians who just don't like the idea of the State spending that much money on prisons. They've gotten involved. And so there's a lot of good work. And as I said, Cedric has been a leader in this process, so we've got to see if we can make this happen, all right? But "my people get with your people."

That redhead right there. It's good having hair like that. You stand out in a crowd.

Education

Q. My name is Martin Brown. I'm from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. And my question is about education. Education is one of the most important things in achieving equal opportunity. And in the past decades, we've seen desegregation orders lifted, and we've seen a resegregation in the South. Furthermore, there's huge disparities in resources for different students in different school districts and parishes. And I was wondering, what can the Federal Government do, what have you done, and what do you think should happen in the future to resolve these issues that we have been fighting for decades?

The President. Are you a teacher, by the way?

Q. I'm not. I'm a student. [*Laughter*]

The President. The—where are you going to school?

Q. LSU.

The President. Fantastic. What are you studying?

Q. Math and economics.

The President. All right. Well, maybe you'll solve this problem. [*Laughter*] Well, thanks for the question. It's a great question.

I talked about this at the town hall. In this—or in the State of the Union. This economy will become more and more knowledge based during the course of our lifetimes, our children's lifetimes, our grandchildren's lifetimes. There's no denying it. That is not going to change. And so when people talk about how the economy is changing and what—how come we can't have it the way it was back in the fif-

ties and sixties, it used to be that if you were willing to work hard, you could drop out of high school, walk into the factory, say, "I'm ready to work," and if you showed yourself to be a hard worker, you could actually build a middle class life on the factory floor. And that's great.

But if you go into a factory today, it's full of computers and robots. And if you don't know math and you don't know science, you can't get that job on the factory floor. And by the way, because of automation and technology, when I go to a car plant—and our—we sold more cars—U.S. automakers sold more cars last year than any time in history. It has come all the way back. It has rehired hundreds of thousands of folks. We created 900,000 manufacturing jobs. But you go into a plant, and it's just quiet and clean, and probably where—if you used to have a thousand people in that plant, now you've got a hundred, just because it's so automated.

And the point is, you are not going to be able to build a middle class life in this society unless you have some education and skills that you can continually enhance and retool throughout your career. That's just—so, young people, I'm going to be honest—I'm not going to call him out, but if you're Ben Simmons, maybe you'll do fine not hitting the books, but—although he's a very fine student, I'm sure. But I—but my point is, unless you are one in a million, you'd better be working hard. You'd better be studying. And it's not going to stop.

Now, the point you made is exactly right. How do we make sure everybody gets that opportunity? Because we know what the ingredients are. We know that early childhood education makes a huge difference, the kind of start that young people get. We know that poorer kids oftentimes are not starting off in school with the same vocabulary because they haven't heard as many words, which means that we've got to train parents, not just teachers, to help get kids rolling. We know that schools that have great teachers and high standards and are creative and have the best technologies and are—that are used the right way make a difference. That high expectations make a difference. So we know all these things.

But the way that education in America has been organized is, local school districts, local control, and local property funding as the primary way of supporting schools. And that has led to big disparities in every State in the country. So the Federal Government can't get at that. What the Federal Government has done and can do is, through programs like Title I funding, we provide additional money to school districts that have a high proportion of low-income kids to try to give them more resources. The Federal Government—what I've done during my administration is worked with States and local school districts to give them incentives to adopt best practices to help develop and train teachers to more effectively teach kids to make sure that we've got high expectations and high standards.

We just—I just signed, last year, a reform of No Child Left Behind, that had led to a lot of overtesting and stress among teachers, but had not necessarily improved learning. But ultimately, it's going to be up to States and local school districts to make a decision about how much do we care about equities in funding within States. That's not something the Federal Government can force States to do.

There was a case way back in the seventies that was brought before the U.S. Supreme Court making the argument that it was unconstitutional to have this property tax-based system of funding education. And the Supreme Court said it's not unconstitutional; it's up to States to make a decision on what they want to do. Some State supreme courts have said it's unconstitutional to fund education that way.

But if you don't have States making those decisions, the Federal Government can't force them to. We can help. We can give incentives. But Federal funding for education accounts only about for 7 percent of total education funding. The main thing we can do is hold up best practices, show people this is what works, this is what doesn't, and then the people of those communities have to determine, this is what we want to do to make a real serious change. All right?

Now, one last point I'm going to make on education: Making sure folks like Che can afford college is critical. And if I had my wish about what I could get Congress to do—I mentioned a whole bunch of issues—one of them also would be the proposal I've put forward: 2 years of community college at no cost for responsible students.

Tennessee has already adopted this. Tennessee has already adopted this proposal. The city of Chicago is working to adopt it. So you've got Democrats and Republicans who have seen the wisdom of this. If young people can go to a community college for 2 years at no cost, that means they can get a lot of credits out of the way. They can then transfer to a 4-year institution. But they've cut their costs in half. And this is an affordable proposal. I mean, we proposed paying for it essentially by closing some corporate tax loopholes and some tax breaks for hedge funds. It's enough money to actually make sure that every young person has at least that baseline. And that's part of the reason why America became an economic superpower was because, earlier than anybody else, we said we're going to give everybody universal high school education. Now, the next step is, everybody in addition to high school education should be able to get that 2 years of postsecondary education as well.

All right? So how much time do I have? I've got to check with my people. One or two more questions. Okay, this young lady right there. You can stop jumping. [*Laughter*] Yes, I just called on you, but do you actually have a question, or were you just jumping? [*Laughter*] Just—all right, where is the mike? Right here. Right here. Yes, you. I don't know why you're surprised. [*Laughter*] She—you raised your hand.

First Lady Michelle Obama/The President's Advice for Young People

Q. Thank you so much for taking my question. First off, my name is Angana Turner. I'm a law student at Tulane, in New Orleans, in the Big Easy.

The President. There you go.

Q. I'm here with my little sister and one of my other friends from Tulane, who also went to Columbia for undergrad.

The President. Okay.

Q. First off, I just want to say that we're very inspired by you and the First Lady.

The President. That's nice.

Q. And you are our biggest inspirations. And we want to be just like you guys, so can you help us? Give us some tips? [*Laughter*]

The President. I'm sorry, what was the question? [*Laughter*]

Q. The question is, can you help us be more like you and the First Lady and give us some tips to be——

The President. Some tips?

Q. Yes.

The President. Well, look, I will say this. Michelle and I, we've been through an extraordinary journey. When we think about where we've come from, Michelle grew up on the South Side of Chicago. Her mom was a secretary. Her dad worked at the water filtration plant. Neither of them ever went to college. They lived on the second floor of her mom's sister's house, a little bungalow. She was—we were talking the other day, she was watching HGTV. She likes watching HGTV. And for those of you who don't know, Home and Garden TV. [*Laughter*]

And I guess there was this show about this so-called movement or trend towards tiny houses, right? So people get these little, tiny—some of them they put on—hitch on the back of their car, some of them they're already there. She said, I didn't know this was a movement because we lived in a tiny house. [*Laughter*] I—we just thought that's how you live. We didn't know this was a—we were cutting edge. [*Laughter*]

And so her—Michelle, her brother, her dad, her mom—her dad, by the way, had multiple sclerosis, so he's going to work every day. He had to wake up an hour early to get to work because it took a long time for him to just button his shirt and get in the car and then get out of the car and then get to his job.

And in that second floor, with—and I know, because Michelle and I, right after we got mar-

ried, we stayed in that same place before we were able to save up enough to buy our place. These two folks were able to raise these incredible young people, Michelle and her brother, who both ended up going to college and both had these extraordinary careers.

Now, I say all that because Michelle would be the first to say—and I certainly would be the first to say—the only reason this happened was because there were people who invested in us. So there were park programs in Chicago, public park programs, where she could be part of dance classes and her brother could be in Little League. And there were accelerated programs at her public elementary school where she had teachers who really took extra time. And then, there was a magnet school that she was able to attend and that was able to get her prepared for college. And then, she got student loans and support in order to be able to go to college and go to law school. Although, she tells the story about how her dad, he couldn't really contribute much, but he insisted on writing something, a check, to help support that college education for her and her brother because he knew what it was worth.

And so when you ask sort of the main tip I have—look, we benefited because somebody invested in us. The most important tip I would have is make sure not only are you working hard to deserve that investment, but that you're also investing in the next generation coming up behind you. If you do that—if you do that—then you're going to do great things. And your sister will do great things.

And the one other young—the one other thing I tell young people all the time: Don't worry so much about what you want to be, worry about what you want to do. Worry about the kind of person you want to be and what you want to accomplish. And the reason I say that is because a lot of times people ask me, oh, I'm interested in politics, how can I get—I say, well, let me tell you, the people who are most successful in politics and business and whatever, they don't start off saying, I want to be President or Governor; they start off by saying, I want to give people a better education, or I want to make sure that folks have jobs, or I believe in justice under the law. And they pursue a goal. They're trying to get something done.

A byproduct of that is that they may find themselves in positions of authority or power or influence. But even if you never get elected to something, if you're interested in the environment, you don't have to be the head of the EPA to make a difference. You might organize in a local community to clean up a site and plant gardens and make sure that the water is clean. And you can look back and then say, wow, what an amazing life I've had, and look at all the difference that I've made.

And I'll tell you, the same is true in business. The most successful businesspeople—if you talk to somebody like a Bill Gates, they don't start off saying, "I want to be the second richest man in the world." They start off saying, "I really want to figure out this computer thing." "I want to make this thing work better." "I'm excited or interested in how we can solve this problem." And then, because they're so passionate about it and they've worked so hard at it, it turns out, they make something really good, and they're—everybody else says, I want to be part of that. That, I think, is a good tip as well.

All right. I've only got time for one more question. It's a young man's turn, and he's right in front, and he looks very sharp. He's got his tie on and everything.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Q. How you doing, Mr. President?

The President. How you doing? What's your name?

Q. My name is Anthony King. And I am an 18-year-old mass communications major, and I go to the Southern University and A&M College. [*Applause*]

The President. All right, okay.

Q. Mr. President, first, I would like to say thanks for being an inspiration, because I aspire to be where you are in the next 30 years, and I know I will be there.

The President. Okay.

Q. But one of my main questions for you, sir, Mr. President—going to an HBCU institute such as Southern University, most times, I

know when I go recruit off of high school students, most of the time, a lot of them say: "Oh, I don't want to go to an HBCU because I feel like if I go to an HBCU, I won't get as many opportunities as a student at a university as LSU or Tulane." So what is your take of—or advice to students like me, thousands of students like me who go to HBCUs, and us finishing the course in order to be great leaders in this society?

The President. Okay. All right. [*Applause*] See, you've got some folks voting for you already.

Well, first of all, the role of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities in producing our leadership and expanding opportunity—training doctors and teachers and lawyers and ministers who change the landscape of America—I hope most people know that story, and if not, you'd better learn it. Because it has been powerful and continues to be a powerful tradition.

And I will tell you that if you have done well at an HBCU and graduated and you go to an employer and are making the kind of presentation you make or a Morehouse man makes or a Spelman young lady makes, you will do just fine. I don't think it's true that actually people don't take that—or discount that tradition. And you will be credentialed. You'll succeed.

I do think that there's a range of challenges that HBCUs face. Some are doing great; some are having more difficulty. And some of that's good. Look—or some of it is the result of good things. We don't live in a society where African Americans are restricted in what colleges they can go to. And I want them to be able to go to an LSU or a Tulane as well as a Southern, as well as a Morehouse, as well as a Howard or a Spelman. That—so more opportunities open up. That's good.

We have been very supportive of HBCUs over the last several years. And to their credit, the previous administration had supported them as well. There are some HBCUs that are having trouble with graduation rates. And that is a source of concern. And what we've said to those HBCUs is, we want to work with you, but we don't want a situation in which young people are taking out loans, getting in debt, thinking that they're going to get a great education, and then, halfway through, they're dropping out.

Now, some of it is, those HBCUs may be taking chances on some kids that other schools might not. And that's a positive thing, and that has to be taken into account. But we also have to make sure that colleges—any college, HBCU or non-HBCU—take seriously the need to graduate that student and not load them up with debt.

Everybody needs a college education or a secondary education—an education beyond high school. Even if it's at a community college, if it's a technical school, if it's a training program, you're going to need more training as your career goes on.

But I don't want you taking out a Pell grant or a bunch of—not a Pell grant—like a Federal loan or a private loan, and you walk out with $50,000, $60,000, $100,000 worth of debt, and you didn't get your degree. So we are working very hard with every school, all colleges and universities, not just to reduce costs, but also to increase graduation rates, give students a better sense as they come in—here's what it's going to take for you to finish; here's why you've got to not lollygag and not take enough credits and think going to college is about partying, because it's actually about getting your degree. And we want students and parents to be better informed about that process ahead of time.

All right, listen, you guys have been wonderful. Michelle, Sasha, Malia, Bo, Sunny, they all send their love. But I want—before we go, I want to remind you of what I said. Our system of government only works when you are involved not just by voting, but by being informed and staying involved throughout the process. Your Governor, your mayor, your Congressman, they all want to do right by you. But there are going to be challenges. There are going to be folks who want to stop progress. There are going to be people who like the status quo. There's always going to be in this democracy countervailing pressures. And if you want to see change, you've got to help make it happen.

When I ran for office in 2007, 2008, I did not say, "Yes, I can." I said——

Audience members. Yes, we can!

The President. Yes, we can, people. God bless you. Love you. Thank you, New Orleans. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Che'dra Joseph, student, McKinley Senior High School, who introduced the President; Ben Simmons, forward, Louisiana State University men's basketball team, and his father Dave Simmons; former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden; Madeline Cox Arlea, judge, U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey; U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey Paul J. Fishman; Federal probation officer Kevin Egli; Essex County, NJ, resident Dquan Rosario, a former participant in the Department of Justice's "Re-New" prisoner reentry program in Newark, NJ; and William H. Gates III, founder, technology adviser, and board member, Microsoft Corp. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson and brother-in-law Craig M. Robinson.

Memorandum on Delegation of Certain Functions and Authorities Under Section 103(b)(2) of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010, as Amended
January 15, 2016

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Delegation of Certain Functions and Authorities under Section 103(b)(2) of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010, as Amended

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, I hereby order as follows:

I hereby delegate the functions and authorities vested in the President by section 103(b)(2)(B)(vi) of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010, Public Law 111–195, as amended, to the Secretary of State.

Any reference herein to provisions of any Act related to the subject of this memorandum shall be deemed to include references to any hereafter-enacted provisions of law that are the same or substantially the same as such provisions.

You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: This memorandum was not received for publication in the *Federal Register*.

The President's Weekly Address
January 16, 2016

Hi, everybody. On Tuesday, I gave my final State of the Union Address. And a focus was this: How do we make the new economy work better for everyone, not just those at the top?

After the worst economic crisis in our lifetimes, we're in the midst of the longest streak of private sector job growth in our history: more than 14 million new jobs, an unemployment rate cut in half. At the same time, our economy continues to go through profound changes that began long before the great recession hit. It changed to the point where, even when folks have jobs, even when the economy is growing, it's harder for working families to pull themselves out of poverty, harder for young people to start out on their

careers, and tougher for workers to retire when they want to.

That's a big part of the reason a lot of working families are feeling anxious. It offends our fundamental American belief that everybody who works hard should be able to get ahead.

That's why we've been fighting so hard to give families more opportunity and more security: by working to create more good jobs, invest in our middle class, and help working people get a raise. That's what the Affordable Care Act is all about—filling in the gaps in employer-based care so that when somebody loses a job, or goes back to school, or starts that new business, they still have health care. And it's why I believe we've got to take steps to modernize our unemployment insurance system.

If a hard-working American loses her job, regardless of what State she lives in, we should make sure she can get unemployment insurance and some help to retrain for her next job. If she's been unemployed for a while, we should reach out to her and connect her with career counseling. And if she finds a new job that doesn't pay as much as her old one, we should offer some wage insurance that helps her pay her bills. Under my plan, experienced workers who now make less than $50,000 could replace half of their lost wages: up to $10,000 over 2 years. It's a way to give families some stability and encourage folks to rejoin the workforce, because we shouldn't just be talking about unemployment, we should be talking about reemployment.

That's when America works best: when everyone has opportunity, when everyone has some security, and when everyone can contribute to this country that we love. That's how we make sure that hard-working families can get ahead. And that's what I'll be fighting for with every last day of my Presidency.

Thanks, everybody. Have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:50 a.m. on January 15 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on January 16. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 15, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 16.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Revocation of Executive Orders 13574, 13590, 13622, and 13645 With Respect to Iran, Amendment of Executive Order 13628 With Respect to Iran, and Provision of Implementation Authorities for Aspects of Certain Statutory Sanctions Outside the Scope of United States Commitments Under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action of July 14, 2015

January 16, 2016

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (the "order") revoking Executive Orders 13574, 13590, 13622, and 13645 with respect to Iran and amending Executive Order 13628 with respect to Iran in order to give effect to the United States commitments with respect to sanctions described in section 4 of Annex II and section 17.4 of Annex V of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action of July 14, 2015 (JCPOA) between the P5+1 (China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States), the European Union (EU), and Iran. In addition, the order takes steps to provide implementation authorities for aspects of certain statutory sanctions that are outside the scope of the U.S. commitments to lift nuclear-related sanctions under the JCPOA.

In Executive Order 12957 of March 15, 1995, the President found that the actions and policies of the Government of Iran threaten the national security, foreign policy, and economy

of the United States. To deal with that threat, the President declared a national emergency and imposed prohibitions on certain transactions with respect to the development of Iranian petroleum resources. To further respond to that threat and to provide implementing authority for Iran-related sanctions legislation—including the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–172) (50 U.S.C. 1701 note); certain statutory requirements of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–195) (22 U.S.C. 8501 *et seq.*); section 1245(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (Public Law 112–81) (22 U.S.C. 8513a); certain statutory requirements of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (Public Law 112–158) (22 U.S.C. 8701 *et seq.*); and certain statutory requirements of the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012 (subtitle D of title XII of Public Law 112–239) (22 U.S.C. 8801 *et seq.*) (IFCA)—the President issued Executive Order 12959 of May 6, 1995, Executive Order 13059 of August 19, 1997, Executive Order 13553 of September 28, 2010, Executive Order 13574 of May 23, 2011, Executive Order 13590 of November 20, 2011, Executive Order 13599 of February 5, 2012, Executive Order 13606 of April 22, 2012, Executive Order 13608 of May 1, 2012, Executive Order 13622 of July 30, 2012, Executive Order 13628 of October 9, 2012, and Executive Order 13645 of June 3, 2013.

On July 14, 2015, the P5+1, the EU, and Iran announced the JCPOA, which will verifiably prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and ensure that Iran's nuclear program will be exclusively peaceful. The JCPOA provides for the lifting of nuclear-related sanctions on Iran in exchange for Iran's completion of specified nuclear-related steps, as verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

I have determined that Iran's implementation of the nuclear-related measures specified in sections 15.1–15.11 of Annex V of the JCPOA, as verified by the IAEA, marks a fundamental shift in circumstances with respect to Iran's nuclear program. In order to give effect to the United States commitments with respect to sanctions described in section 4 of Annex II and section 17.4 of Annex V of the JCPOA, section 1 of the order revokes Executive Orders 13574, 13590, 13622, and 13645 in their entirety. Section 2 of the order amends Executive Order 13628 by revoking sections 5 through 7 and section 15 of that order, revising cross references in the remaining sections of that order to the revoked sections, and renumbering the remaining sections of that order.

Section 3(a) of the order provides implementation authority for aspects of section 1244(c)(1)(A) of IFCA; this provision only applies to the extent sanctions are imposed with respect to transactions or activities that are outside the scope of the JCPOA, specifically, providing significant financial, material, technological, or other support to, or goods and services in support of, any activity or transaction on behalf of or for the benefit of persons described in section 1244(c)(2)(C)(iii) of IFCA (i.e., Iranian persons on the list of Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons (SDN List)).

Section 3(b) of the order provides implementation authority for aspects of sections 1244(d)(1)(A), 1245(a)(1), and 1246(a)(1) of IFCA; this provision only applies to the extent sanctions are imposed with respect to transactions or activities that are outside the scope of the JCPOA, as reflected in waiver determinations as to sections 1244(d)(1)(A), 1245(a)(1), and 1246(a)(1) of IFCA issued by the Secretary of State to give effect to sanctions commitments described in sections 17.1-17.3 and 17.5 of Annex V of the JCPOA (including any transactions or activities involving persons on the SDN List), and any renewals thereof.

Section 3(c) of the order provides implementation authority for section 1249 of IFCA, which is outside the scope of the JCPOA.

I have delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury the authority, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA, as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the order, other than the purposes described in section 6 of the order.

All agencies of the United States Government are directed to take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of the order.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Paul D. Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Iran
January 17, 2016

Good morning. This is a good day, because once again, we're seeing what's possible with strong American diplomacy.

As I said in my State of the Union Address, ensuring the security of the United States and the safety of our people demands a smart, patient, and disciplined approach to the world. That includes our diplomacy with the Islamic Republic of Iran. For decades, our differences with Iran meant that our governments almost never spoke to each other. Ultimately, that did not advance America's interests. Over the years, Iran moved closer and closer to having the ability to build a nuclear weapon. But from Presidents Franklin Roosevelt to John F. Kennedy to Ronald Reagan, the United States has never been afraid to pursue diplomacy with our adversaries. And as President, I decided that a strong, confident America could advance our national security by engaging directly with the Iranian Government.

We've seen the results. Under the nuclear deal that we, our allies, and partners reached with Iran last year, Iran will not get its hands on a nuclear bomb. The region, the United States, and the world will be more secure. As I've said many times, the nuclear deal was never intended to resolve all of our differences with Iran. But still, engaging directly with the Iranian Government on a sustained basis, for the first time in decades, has created a unique opportunity—a window—to try to resolve important issues. And today I can report progress on a number of fronts.

First, yesterday marked a milestone in preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Iran has now fulfilled key commitments under the nuclear deal. And I want to take a moment to explain why this is so important.

Over more than a decade, Iran had moved ahead with its nuclear program, and before the deal, it had installed nearly 20,000 centrifuges that can enrich uranium for a nuclear bomb. Today, Iran has removed two-thirds of those machines. Before the deal, Iran was steadily increasing its stockpile of enriched uranium, enough for up to 10 nuclear bombs. Today, more than 98 percent of that stockpile has been shipped out of Iran, meaning Iran now doesn't have enough material for even one bomb. Before, Iran was nearing completion of a new reactor capable of producing plutonium for a bomb. Today, the core of that reactor has been pulled out and filled with concrete so it cannot be used again.

Before the deal, the world had relatively little visibility into Iran's nuclear program. Today, international inspectors are on the ground, and Iran is being subjected to the most comprehensive, intrusive inspection regime ever negotiated to monitor a nuclear program. Inspectors will monitor Iran's key nuclear facilities 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. For decades to come, inspectors will have access to Iran's entire nuclear supply chain. In other words, if Iran tries to cheat—if they try to build a bomb covertly—we will catch them.

So the bottom line is this. Whereas Iran was steadily expanding its nuclear program, we have now cut off every single path that Iran could have used to build a bomb. Whereas it would have taken Iran 2 to 3 months to break out with enough material to rush to a bomb, we've now extended that breakout time to a year, and with the world's unprecedented in-

spections and access to Iran's program, we'll know if Iran ever tries to break out.

Now that Iran's actions have been verified, it can begin to receive relief from certain nuclear sanctions and gain access to its own money that had been frozen. And perhaps most important of all, we've achieved this historic progress through diplomacy, without resorting to another war in the Middle East.

I want to also point out that by working with Iran on this nuclear deal, we were better able to address other issues. When our sailors in the Persian Gulf accidentally strayed into Iranian waters, that could have sparked a major international incident. Some folks here in Washington rushed to declare that it was the start of another hostage crisis. Instead, we worked directly with the Iranian Government and secured the release of our sailors in less than 24 hours.

And this brings me to a second major development: Several Americans unjustly detained by Iran are finally coming home. In some cases, these Americans faced years of continued detention. And I've met with some of their families. I've seen their anguish, how they ache for their sons and husbands. I gave these families my word—I made a vow—that we would do everything in our power to win the release of their loved ones. And we have been tireless. On the sidelines of the nuclear negotiations, our diplomats at the highest level, including Secretary Kerry, used every meeting to push Iran to release our Americans. I did so myself, in my conversation with President Rouhani. After the nuclear deal was completed, the discussions between our governments accelerated. Yesterday these families finally got the news that they had been waiting for.

Jason Rezaian is coming home. A courageous journalist for the Washington Post, who wrote about the daily lives and hopes of the Iranian people, he's been held for a year and a half. He embodies the brave spirit that gives life to the freedom of the press. Jason has already been reunited with his wife and mom.

Pastor Saeed Abedini is coming home. Held for 3½ years, his unyielding faith has inspired people around the world in the global fight to uphold freedom of religion. And now pastor Abedini will return to his church and community in Idaho.

Amir Hekmati is coming home. A former sergeant in the Marine Corps, he's been held for 4½ years. Today his parents and sisters are giving thanks in Michigan.

Two other Americans unjustly detained by Iran have also been released: Nosratollah Khosravi-Roodsari and Matthew Trevithick, an Iranian—who was in Iran as a student. Their cases were largely unknown to the world. But when Americans are freed and reunited with their families, that's something that we can all celebrate.

So I want to thank my national security team, especially Secretary Kerry; Susan Rice, my National Security Adviser; Brett McGurk; Avril Haines; Ben Rhodes. Our whole team worked tirelessly to bring our Americans home, to get this work done. And I want to thank the Swiss Government, which represents our interests in Iran, for their critical assistance.

And meanwhile, Iran has agreed to deepen our coordination as we work to locate Robert Levinson, missing from Iran for more than 8 years. Even as we rejoice in the safe return of others, we will never forget about Bob. Each and every day, but especially today, our hearts are with the Levinson family, and we will not rest until their family is whole again.

In a reciprocal humanitarian gesture, six Iranian Americans and one Iranian serving sentences or awaiting trial in the United States are being granted clemency. These individuals were not charged with terrorism or any violent offenses. They're civilians, and their release is a one-time gesture to Iran given the unique opportunity offered by this moment and the larger circumstances at play. And it reflects our willingness to engage with Iran to advance our mutual interests, even as we ensure the national security of the United States.

So, nuclear deal implemented, American families reunited. The third piece of this work that we got done this weekend involved the United States and Iran resolving a financial dispute that dated back more than three decades. Since 1981, after our nations severed

diplomatic relations, we've worked through a international tribunal to resolve various claims between our countries. The United States and Iran are now settling a longstanding Iranian Government claim against the United States Government. Iran will be returned its own funds, including appropriate interest, but much less than the amount Iran sought.

For the United States, this settlement could save us billions of dollars that could have been pursued by Iran. So there was no benefit to the United States in dragging this out. With the nuclear deal done, prisoners released, the time was right to resolve this dispute as well.

Of course, even as we implement the nuclear deal and welcome our Americans home, we recognize that there remain profound differences between the United States and Iran. We remain steadfast in opposing Iran's destabilizing behavior elsewhere, including its threats against Israel and our Gulf partners and its support for violent proxies in places like Syria and Yemen. We still have sanctions on Iran for its violations on—of human rights, for its support of terrorism, and for its ballistic missile program. And we will continue to enforce these sanctions vigorously. Iran's recent missile test, for example, was a violation of its international obligations. And as a result, the United States is imposing sanctions on individuals and companies working to advance Iran's ballistic missile program. And we are going to remain vigilant about it. We're not going to waver in the defense of our security or that of our allies and partners.

But I do want to once again speak directly to the Iranian people. Yours is a great civilization, with a vibrant culture that has so much to contribute to the world: in commerce and in science and in arts. For decades, your Government's threats and actions to destabilize your region have isolated Iran from much of the world. And now our governments are talking with one another. Following the nuclear deal, you—especially young Iranians—have the opportunity to begin building new ties with the world. We have a rare chance to pursue a new path, a different, better future that delivers progress for both our peoples and the wider world. That's the opportunity before the Iranian people. We need to take advantage of that.

And to my fellow Americans, today we're united in welcoming home sons and husbands and brothers who, in lonely prison cells, have endured an absolute nightmare. But they never gave in, and they never gave up. At long last, they can stand tall and breathe deep the fresh air of freedom.

As a nation, we face real challenges, around the world and here at home. Many of them will not be resolved quickly or easily. But today's progress—Americans coming home, an Iran that has rolled back its nuclear program and accepted unprecedented monitoring of that program—these things are a reminder of what we can achieve when we lead with strength and with wisdom, with courage and resolve and patience. America can do and has done big things when we work together. We can leave this world and make it safer and more secure for our children and our grandchildren for generations to come.

So I want to thank once again Secretary Kerry, our entire national security team, led by Susan Rice. I'm grateful for all the assistance that we received from our allies and partners. And I am hopeful that this signals the opportunity at least for Iran to work more cooperatively with nations around the world to advance their interests and the interests of people who are looking for peace and security for their families.

Thank you so much. God bless you; God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:48 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Hassan Rouhani of Iran; Yeganeh Salehi, wife, and Mary Rezaian, mother, of Jason Rezaian; Ali and Behnaz Hekmati, parents, and Sarah and Leila Hekmati, sisters, of Amir Hekmati; Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition To Counter ISIL Brett H. McGurk; and Iranian Americans Khosrow Afghahi, Tooraj Faridi, Arash Ghahreman, Bahram Mechanic, Nader Modanlo, and Ali Saboonchi, and Iranian citizen Nima Golestaneh, who were granted clemency by the U.S. in exchange for the release of several U.S. citizens by Iran.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Malcolm B. Turnbull of Australia

January 19, 2016

President Obama. Well, it is a great pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Turnbull and his delegation to the Oval Office. We had the opportunity to work together at the G–20 summit in Turkey and then had our first bilateral meeting in Manila during the APEC and ASEAN events. And I emphasized to the Prime Minister at that time and want to reiterate the extraordinary gratitude that the American people have for the strong and steadfast alliance between our two countries.

I've said before that the friendship between the United States and Australia is not only based on common economic and geopolitical interests, but it's also based on an extraordinary affinity and shared values. There are probably—there are very few countries that have as much in common as the United States and Australia does, and I want to thank all the people of Australia for the extraordinary hospitality and graciousness that they've shown me every time that I've had a chance to visit your wonderful country. I'm glad to be able to reciprocate. I will note, it is a little bit colder here—[*laughter*]—than it was down under.

Malcolm has had an opportunity to travel to some key hotspots over the last several days, including Afghanistan and Iraq. And those are just two places where we see the value of Australia's Armed Forces and the remarkable contribution that they have made and the sacrifices that they make consistently.

Keep in mind that in our fight against ISIL, Australia is the second largest contributor of troops on the ground after the United States. They have been a consistent and extraordinarily effective member of the coalition that has helped to deliver an opportunity for the Afghan people to govern themselves and to build up their security forces. And so I'm very much looking forward to hearing from Malcolm his impressions about how we can continue to focus on what we call the parent tumor of ISIL in Iraq and Syria and the important work that we have to do together on countering violent extremism generally.

We note the recent attack in Jakarta that appears to have been ISIL-inspired, and it's a reminder that Southeast Asia has generally done a very effective job fighting against extremism, but it is an area that we have to pay attention to and watch. And obviously, Australia has been impacted in the past by such terrorist attacks. So we're going to talk about how we can strengthen our cooperation, both in Syria and Iraq, the state of affairs in Afghanistan, but also countering violent extremism globally. And Australia will be a very important partner in that process.

We'll also have a chance to talk about the Asia-Pacific region, where we have common interests across the board. Our rebalance has been effective in part because we have such strong treaty alliances, and Australia is one of those critical alliances. And our Marines in Australia, the joint exercises that we do, the work that we do to affirm an international order and rules of the road with respect to issues like maritime law all are critical for the continued expansion of commerce and the sustained, peaceful conditions that allow our economies to thrive.

And finally, we'll have a chance to talk about TPP. We are both the—part of the driving force that created this rules-based system that is now being prepared to ratify among the various nations. It is going to be good for our economy. It is going to be good for our workers and our businesses. And it reaffirms that in order for us to thrive in the 21st century—particularly economies that are respectful of rule of law and concerned about labor rights and environmental rights—it's important for us to be making the rules in this region, and that's exactly what TPP does.

And I know that the Prime Minister has an agenda to spur additional innovation and investment in science and technology in Australia, which in this economy is going to be vital

for any economy to succeed. So I'll be interested to hear his plans and maybe offer my thoughts about the work that we're doing to continue to make sure that our economy is a dynamic, knowledge-based economy.

So I am grateful for our friendship, grateful for the work that we do together, very grateful for the sacrifices that have been made by Australian troops around the world, working side by side with our outstanding men and women in uniform. And I look forward to a very productive meeting.

Prime Minister Turnbull. Thank you. Thank you very much, Barack. You've been very hospitable and generous in inviting me to Washington this month. And your agencies have been very open.

We've had very productive discussions with the Defense Secretary, Ash Carter. Together, we went to Arlington and paid our respects to the—on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and recalled the comradeship, over a hundred years, of Australians and Americans fighting side by side in freedom's cause.

You're quite right, our alliance, our relationship is founded not just on national self-interest, not just on economics or kinship, but on shared values. We define our national identities by reference to common political values of freedom, the rule of law, democracy—real democracy, which empowers the majority, but constrains them so as to protect the minority. So we have those strong values in common.

And as you've said, just over the last few days, I've been in Baghdad and Kabul meeting our servicemen and meeting many of your service leaders there as well. And I've learned firsthand from our people and yours and, indeed, from the Government of Iraq, from its Prime Minister, how Australians and Americans working together were able to support the Iraqi security forces in the retaking of Ramadi, which has been an absolute adrenaline shot of confidence for that Government, a very, very significant result. And it was a great combination of our servicemen and women working with the Iraqis to achieve that.

In Kabul, I met with our soldiers who are training the Afghan National Army, their next generation of leaders, building capacity so that they can secure and hold their own country. And once again, we're doing that in partnership. So it is a very strong—very, very strong partnership.

We've had very good discussions with your intelligence community too. That is especially important in the battle against violent extremists. We have to constantly lift our game in the way we engage with and tackle these extremists—particularly ISIL, but there are many others—as they operate in the cybersphere. Archaic and barbaric though they may be, their use regrettably of the Internet is very sophisticated. And so I'm pleased that we're going to be working on even closer collaboration there.

Barack, you mentioned the TPP. And can I say, as I've just said to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, encouraging them to encourage their Congressmen and Senators to support it, that the TPP is much more than a trade deal. The prosperity of the world, the security of the world has been founded on the peace and order in the Asia-Pacific, where—which has been delivered underwritten by the United States and its allies, including Australia.

And what we've been able to do there is deliver a period of peace—a long period of peace—from which everybody has benefited. And America's case—its proposition—is more than simply security. It is standing up for, as you said, the rules-based international order, an order where might is not right, where the law must prevail, where there is real transparency, where people can invest with confidence.

And the TPP is lifting those standards. And so it is much more than a trade deal. And I think when people try to analyze it in terms of what it adds to this amount of GDP or that, that's important. But the critical thing is the way it promotes the continued integration of those economies, because that is as important an element in our security in the maintenance of the values which both our countries share as all of our other efforts, whether they are in defense or whether they are in traditional diplomacy.

So right across the board, Mr. President, we have so much in common. And I congratu-

late you, finally, on the completion of the arrangements with Iran over their nuclear program. That has been—that was a formidable effort, a great example of leadership on the part of the United States. And I see the—I think there is, in that very difficult part of the world, which we will discuss shortly in much more detail—that is going to be an important step forward in ensuring the stability of that region.

So we have a lot to discuss. I thank you very much for your hospitality, for your generosity, and the way in which—typical of the relations between Australians and Americans—we have been able to speak candidly at all levels of your Government, in a common cause, because the values we share are the values not just for these times, but for all time.

Thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you. Thank you, Malcolm. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:21 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Prime Minister Turnbull referred to Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi of Iraq.

Message to the Senate Returning Without Approval Legislation Regarding Congressional Disapproval of an Army Corps of Engineers and Environmental Protection Agency Rule on the Definition of "Waters of the United States" Under the Clean Water Act

January 19, 2016

To the Senate of the United States:

I am returning herewith without my approval S.J. Res. 22, a resolution that would nullify a rule issued by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Army to clarify the jurisdictional boundaries of the Clean Water Act. The rule, which is a product of extensive public involvement and years of work, is critical to our efforts to protect the Nation's waters and keep them clean; is responsive to calls for rulemaking from the Congress, industry, and community stakeholders; and is consistent with decisions of the United States Supreme Court.

We must protect the waters that are vital for the health of our communities and the success of our businesses, agriculture, and energy development. As I have noted before, too many of our waters have been left vulnerable. Pollution from upstream sources ends up in the rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and coastal waters near which most Americans live and on which they depend for their drinking water, recreation, and economic development. Clarifying the scope of the Clean Water Act helps to protect these resources and safeguard public health. Because this resolution seeks to block the progress represented by this rule and deny businesses and communities the regulatory certainty and clarity needed to invest in projects that rely on clean water, I cannot support it. I am therefore vetoing this resolution.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
January 19, 2016.

Remarks in Detroit, Michigan

January 20, 2016

The President. Hello, Detroit! Oh, it's good to be back in Michigan, even though it might be just a little cold here. [*Laughter*] But I'm from Chicago, so I'm used to it.

A couple people I want to start off by introducing. First of all, Detroit is coming back, and everybody deserves credit for that. But one person who deserves special credit for it is your mayor, Mike Duggan. He's doing an outstanding job. So we're very proud of him. You've got four outstanding Members of Congress: Debbie Dingell; the "Dean"—John Conyers; Brenda Lawrence; Sandy Levin. We've got one of the finest Congressmen who ever served and a great friend of Detroit; John Dingell is here. There he is.

And a dear friend of mine—we drove over together. And I was just telling my team, when I was running for the United States Senate—not for the President—when I was running for the United States Senate and nobody knew who I was and nobody could pronounce my name—[*laughter*]—the regional leader of the UAW in Illinois was a guy named Dennis Williams. And he was my friend and supporter before just about anybody else out there. And then, when I ran for President, by that time, we'd made some great friends in the UAW, and so I just want to say how proud I am to call him a friend. Your UAW president, Dennis Williams.

And give it up for Cindy for that outstanding introduction.

Audience member. My mom!

The President. That's your mom?

Audience member. That's my mom.

The President. That's her—are you proud of your mom?

Audience member. I'm very proud of my mom!

The President. Oh, look at that. Well, you're, like, out of a TV show. What, are you, like, a child actor or something? Look at him. He's all handsome, all "yeah." [*Laughter*] All right, Cindy, he's a pretty impressive young man.

I want to pick up briefly on something that Cindy said, and that is just to talk for a second about what's happening in Flint. I am very proud of what I've done as President, but the only job that's more important to me is the job of father. And I know that if I was a parent up there, I would be beside myself that my kids' health could be at risk. And that's why, over the weekend, I declared a Federal emergency in Flint to send more resources on top of the assistance that we've already put on the ground. We've designated a Federal coordinator to make sure the people of Flint get what they need from their country.

Yesterday I met with Mayor Weaver in the White House, in the Oval Office, and I told her that we are going to have her back and all the people of Flint's back as they work their way through this terrible tragedy. It is a reminder of why you can't shortchange basic services that we provide to our people and that we, together, provide as a government to make sure that the public health and safety is preserved.

But I have come to Detroit for another reason as well. I already drive in a great American car, which we affectionately know as the Beast. [*Laughter*] Next year, I've got to give it up. I'm saying goodbye to the Beast. So I figured that I needed to do a little browsing now at the Detroit Auto Show. I know they've got auto shows in Paris and Frankfurt and Tokyo. But there's only one Motor City. There's only one Detroit. And if you're looking for the world's best cars and the workers who make those cars, you need to be in Detroit, Michigan. That's why I'm here.

Audience member. CT6!

The President. He said the GT6—CT6. All right.

Audience member. Get that!

The President. Well, I'm looking at all of them now. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. You get that Ford. [*Laughter*]

Audience members. [*Inaudible*]

The President. All right, I've got the idea. I'm not going to tell you all what I'm buying now. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Jeep Grand Cherokee! [*Laughter*]

The President. Now, I will say, the Cherokee was my car—first new car I ever bought. Somebody was asking me—I didn't get a new car until I was, like, 32. [*Laughter*] I always had an old, beat-up hoopty. [*Laughter*] But my first brandnew car with the brandnew car smell was a Jeep Cherokee. And I thought I was a bad

man once I was in that car. [*Laughter*] I was all up high, looking at the road. Man. [*Laughter*]

I could not be prouder of this industry and the road that we've traveled together. And I'm proud of each and every one of you. Think about what you've fought through. It wasn't that long ago that a crisis that started on Wall Street sparked a great recession on Main Street, and it cost millions of Americans their jobs, their homes, the savings that they had worked a lifetime to build. Nearly one in five autoworkers got a pink slip, laid off from a job in an iconic industry that had been a ticket to the middle class for generations. And across the Midwest, plants closed with little hope of reopening.

So the American auto industry, the beating heart of American manufacturing, was flatlining. That's where we were when I took office 7 years ago today. The year before I took office, the auto industry had laid off 400,000 people—400,000. And we had a choice to make.

With the economy in a freefall, the markets frozen, there were no private companies, there were no private investors who were going to step up and take a chance on you. So we could have kept on handing over billions of taxpayer dollars to automakers, but things didn't change and it just got worse—that would have just kicked the can down the road. Or we could have done nothing, thrown in the towel, walked away from this industry entirely. And a lot of folks suggested we do that. They'd deny it later, but that's what they said at the time.

Audience member. But not you!

The President. Think about what that would have meant for America. GM and Chrysler would not exist today. Suppliers and distributors that get their business from those companies would have died off. And when that happened, Ford could have gone down too. Because those supplier chains are vital to all three industries—or all three companies. Production stopped. Factories shuttered. Proud companies chopped up, sold off for scraps. And all of you, the men and women who built these companies with your hands, would have been hung out to dry.

More than 1 million Americans would have lost their jobs at the worst possible time. Not just autoworkers, but the people in communities that depend on you: the teachers who teach your kids, the small-business owners who know your name. Their livelihoods were at stake as well.

And so we decided we're not going to let that happen, and we came up with another option. In exchange for help, we demanded responsibility. We said that the auto industry would have to truly change, not just pretend like it was changing. The industry retooled, it restructured. Management and labor got together to settle your differences. Everybody put some skin in the game. Everybody sacrificed for the sake and survival of this industry.

And it wasn't popular. It wasn't even popular in Detroit. [*Laughter*] Wasn't even popular in Michigan. But I said at the time, I didn't run for President to be popular. I ran for President to do what needed to be done. And I placed my bet on you. And after visiting auto plants across the Midwest and seeing what you have done firsthand, let me tell you, I'd make that same bet any day of the week. Because today, factories are humming, business is booming, the American auto industry is all the way back—all the way back.

Seven years ago, auto sales hit a 27-year-low. Last year, they hit an alltime high. Across the country, workers who thought that they'd never make another car again can't make them fast enough. You guys see it. New shifts are coming on. The Big Three are starting to boost wages. Since our plan kicked in, the American auto industry has added more than 640,000 new jobs. And because everybody came together and everybody worked together, not only are you producing more cars, but they're some of the most high-tech, most fuel-efficient, best looking cars in the world. They're designed and engineered and forged and built right here in the United States of America.

And because the auto industry came back, that obviously gave the capacity for Detroit to start coming back. So you've now cut the city's unemployment rate by more than half. Folks aren't writing off Detroit anymore. Starting 5

years ago, I sent some of my top people across the Federal Government to help City Hall and ordinary citizens to spark that comeback here in Motor City. So today, you've got buses that are running again, streets that are well lit again, new homes and businesses getting off the ground again. There's still plenty of work to do, but you can feel the difference. You can feel something special happening in Detroit.

I stopped by a restaurant to have lunch with the mayor and a good friend of mine, Tom, who has started Shinola here, and one of you outstanding autoworkers, and an emergency room doctor. What was that restaurant's name?

Audience member. The Jolly Pumpkin!

The President. The Jolly Pumpkin. It was—that was tasty stuff. [*Laughter*] And then, I went over to Shinola and—now, I already had this Shinola watch. It's a good-looking watch. Made right here. And for you who don't know the story of Shinola and how it started—a factory here in Detroit and hiring folks who had never been involved in manufacturing before, and now it's got over 500 employees, and it's shipping these spiffy-looking watches and bicycles and belts and wallets and purses. And this is some good-looking stuff.

And the people who work there—we were talking about how there was a woman who was homeless, got a job there as a janitor, is now the supervisor of one of the assembly processes over there to make the watches. Completely turned her life around. Well, that's the story of Detroit when you give people a chance, when you have confidence in what we can do together.

And so what's true of Detroit is true of the country. And that's part of the reason I came here. I'm shopping for a car—[*laughter*]—but right now I want people to remember how far we've come. And it's not—I'm not running for office again. The reason I want to remind people is not because I'm on the ticket, it's because I want America to have confidence in where we can go.

This was—I talked about this at the State of the Union Address. Seven years ago, we put in place new plans to help hard-working families get back on their feet. We put folks back to work rebuilding roads and bridges. We passed big, new, middle class tax cuts. We asked the wealthiest Americans, who were doing fine, even through the recession, to pay a little bit more, we—pay their fair share. We rethought our health care system. We reinvented our energy sector. We put in place the toughest Wall Street reforms in history. And today, businesses like this one have added more than 14 million new jobs. This has been the longest streak of job creation in our history—in our history.

The United States of America right now has the strongest, most durable economy in the world. We're doing so much better than other folks are doing. The American economy right now is 10-percent bigger than it was at its peak, before the financial crisis. In Europe, it hasn't gotten back to where it was back in 2007, 2008.

Audience member. Thank you, Mr. President!

The President. We've added more jobs than almost all the other advanced countries combined during this period.

So when you hear people—I won't say who—but when you hear people—[*laughter*]—claiming that America is in decline, they don't know what they're talking about. They're peddling fiction during a political season. And it's strange to watch people try to outdo each other in saying how bad things are. When one says our economy is terrible, the next says it's terrible and on fire and covered in bees. [*Laughter*] And they'll just come up with stuff. They're racing to see who can talk down America the most.

But remember—and this is why I want everybody to remember—these are the same folks who would have let this industry go under. These are the—some of the same folks who back in Washington called our plan to save the auto industry "the road to socialism," said it was going to be a "disaster," said, "They'll run it into the ground." Those are quotes, by the way. I'm not making that up. Look it up. [*Laughter*] And so when I hear today some of these folks running for President, who can't bring themselves to admit what you guys have accomplished, I don't want you to take that seriously. Because when you ignore the progress we've made, then you're not going to make

good choices about where we need to go in the future.

If they're still trying to spin a tale that the auto rescue was a bad idea, the same folks who predicted that you'd fail, they had other predictions about policies too. They predicted gas prices would hit $6.50 a gallon. I don't know what you all are paying right now, but it ain't no $6.50. In most places, it's $2 or less. On the way here, we saw gas for less than 2 bucks. But that's what they said: It's going to be $6.50.

Then, they predicted, "Oh, the deficits are going to go way, way up." We cut our deficits by almost three quarters. They've been below average for the past 40 years. They said, "We'll get unemployment to 6 percent by 2016." Well, we got it down to 5 about a year ahead of schedule—of their schedule.

This is the crowd that was dead set against betting on you and your hard work and your professionalism and your skills. They've somehow still convinced themselves that cutting taxes for folks at the very top is going to help you succeed. I think there's a better plan. By the way, they said when I—when we raise taxes on the folks at the very top who had been doing great, they said, "Oh, well, that's going to kill jobs." And guess what, 70 months straight of job creation now. Just like they said when Obamacare passed, "Oh, that's going to be terrible"—18 million people with health insurance who didn't have it before.

So, now, this is not to make an argument for complacency. I'm not suggesting we should be satisfied where we are. Because what is true is, the economy has been changing in profound ways for the last 20, 30 years. You've all seen it. Technology has made it easier to replace jobs on the assembly line. That's been going on for a long time. Any job where work can be automated is in danger of being replaced. The attacks on unions have been going on for a long time. And when union participation is down, workers have less leverage to get a raise.

The fact that companies can move because of increased technology means more global competition. And all these trends have squeezed workers, even when they've got jobs, even when the economy is growing, which means that a lot of Americans sometimes feel anxious. And that tells us we've got more work to do. But as I said at the State of the Union, if we're going to solve those problems for working families and middle class families, for your neighbors, for your friends, for your kids, your grandkids, then we've got to have smart answers, not just a bunch of fantasies that end up helping the folks who don't need help.

In this economy, we've got to make sure that everybody who works hard has a chance at opportunity and security. And real opportunity in this new economy means every American has got to get the education and training they need to land a good-paying job. I know that any of your fathers or grandfathers who worked in an auto plant, they wouldn't recognize a plant today. It's just entirely different. And you've got to know computers, and you've got to have skills that didn't even exist a generation ago. So that means that we've got to really make sure our kids are properly trained.

And the good news is, last year, our high school graduation rate reached another alltime high. And we've got to build on that progress with early childhood education for every child that needs it so they get a good start, and computer and math classes to make kids job-ready in this new economy. And we should recruit and support and pay properly great teachers for our kids. We've got to make college affordable for every American. And college doesn't mean necessarily a 4-year degree. It might mean a community college. It might mean a technical school. But we—you're going to need more than just high school, which is why I've laid out a plan to provide 2 years of community college at no cost for every responsible student. I'm going to fight to get that done, to get that moving this year.

Then, we've got to think about real security. Now, this is a union facility. So you know the importance of secure health benefits and secure retirement benefits. But not everybody in this new economy has that. So real security in this new economy, in addition to encouraging workers to join together so they have a voice and some leverage, also means benefits and protections you can count on.

When Social Security and Medicare are more than—important than ever, we shouldn't weaken Social Security and Medicare, we should strengthen Social Security and Medicare. For Americans that are short of retirement, benefits should be mobile, like everything else. That's what we did with the Affordable Care Act. The idea with the Affordable Care Act was not to replace employer-based care, but it was to say, if you lost your job—as some of you did—and you tried to buy it on COBRA, and it was so expensive, you couldn't even think about it; or if you decided you wanted to go back to school for more training; or let's say you decided you wanted to start a new business, you had a chance to still get some coverage at a reasonable price and good quality. And as I said, 18 million people have gained coverage so far.

So now we should make sure that when folks lose their job, the system works for them. For example, they should be able to get unemployment insurance that encourages retraining for a business that's ready to hire. And if a new job doesn't pay as much, there should be a system of wage insurance in place so that folks, if they take a job with the hope of retraining and ultimately getting a better job, in the meantime they can still pay their bills. And if you take a part-time job or a temporary job before you get—find that full-time job, you'd have some insurance, some cushion. And when folks are going from job to job, they should still be able to save for retirement and take their savings with them. See, all that would make this new economy work better for everybody.

Now, even as we work to secure real opportunity and secure—and security for working families, we've also got to make sure that the system is not rigged against working families. Now, GM, Ford, Chrysler—those are all great companies. Shinola is a great company. I believe in private enterprise. I believe in the incredible dynamism of the American economy, and that's business. And we're—America's business is business. We love business.

But after years of corporate profits, we also have to make sure that business is sharing what it makes with the workers who make it. And that's the American way. I mean, Henry Ford used to talk about, I've got to pay my workers enough so they can buy my cars. That's good for business. And so working families are not going to get more opportunity or bigger paychecks by letting big banks or big oil or hedge funds write their own rules and do whatever they want. They're—you're not helping middle class families by allowing a tax on collective bargaining to go unanswered. And I'm not going to back down on my belief that we've got to have strong rules to protect the air that our kids breathe and the water that they drink. It is more important than ever.

And by the way, I should just point out that the auto industry here in the United States has figured out that we can make more fuel-efficient cars that reduce the carbon pollution that's causing climate change and make a profit and put more people to work. There's no contradiction between creating jobs and economic growth and caring for the environment.

And in this new economy, workers and parents and startups and small businesses, they need more of a voice, not less. So this year, I'm going to lift up some of the businesses who have figured this out: what it means to do right by your workers and the fact that that's good for your bottom line. A lot of our best corporate citizens are also our most creative and our most innovative. And in this new economy, it's that spirit of creativity and innovation that we need more than ever.

So you've got to be thinking about the future, not just the past. And that's what you're doing here in Detroit. You're not just making cars that people want today, you're thinking about cars that people are going to want tomorrow. When I was over at the auto show, I saw plug-in hybrids and electrics and fuel-efficient cars that can protect our planet, save people money at the pump. You're working on self-driving cars that one day could prevent accidents and save lives. This year, my administration is going to take steps to get more of those cars on the road. Right here at GM and UAW, we're teaming up to train American workers for the good-paying jobs of the future.

That's the kind of spirit that's going to lead us forward, that says we're all in it together, we've all got a stake in each other's success. It doesn't always get a lot of attention. But all across this country, if you just look for it, all kinds of good things are happening. And all the division and yelling and rudeness and controversy that gets spun up and manufactured, that's not who we are. That's not how we live on a day-to-day basis. You don't—at your workplace, everybody is on the same team trying to get the job done. You might have a disagreement; you try to figure it out. You don't start shouting. You don't start saying, well, I like those kind of people, but not those kind of folks.

And by the way, the UAW, part of the reason it succeeded was, it was one of the first unions to realize that we're all in this together and didn't divide people up. You look at the history of the UAW: It was one of the first unions to say, no, we're going to take everybody. If you're working hard, if you're doing the right thing, trying to raise your family, we're going to be better off if we're hand in hand trying to make sure workers get a fair deal, even if we don't look like each other, even if we don't all worship at the same place. That's what built the UAW. That's what built America. [*Applause*] That's what built America.

But I see it all across the country. I see it in the Leathers family from Sterling Heights. So Steve Leathers—I just want to tell a quick story here—works for a company called Empire Wire and Supply. And during the crisis, they had to lay off nearly 20 percent of their workers. So Steve's friends were losing their jobs. His neighbors were losing their homes. So one night, he tells his wife if things didn't get better, they might have to leave too.

Steve didn't know it at the time, but his 13-year-old daughter, Brianna, heard what he said—because, I've discovered, kids hear everything. So you all got to watch what you say around your kids. They'll repeat it back to you, sometimes, 10 years later. [*Laughter*] So without telling her dad, Brianna sat down and she wrote me a letter. Thirteen years old. She said, "Dear President Obama, I am 13 years old, and I am worried about my family's future in Michigan. My dad," she wrote, "works for a company that manufactures cables for the automotive companies. This industry isn't doing so well, but these guys are still doing okay."

So Brianna is here today. Where's Brianna? Wave. There you are, right there. She's older now. So Brianna is 13 years old now—or she's 19 years old now. This was 6 years ago. She's a young lady. She's working her way through Macomb Community College. Her twin brother, Brendan—is that Brendan right next to her? He's at Oakland University, half hour away. Dad is still in Michigan—that's dad. But today, Steve's future is very different.

But before the crisis, Steve's company had about 110 employees. Today, they've got nearly 200. Brianna says—she's looking back, and she says: "I remember a lot of people getting laid off. They all have jobs now." Steve remembers what it was like back then; there was a panic. Now, he says, I'm 110-percent confident we're going in the right direction.

Now, Steve and his family, they're just one example. But those stories are multiplying all across the country. We don't hear a lot about them. They don't get on TV. You won't always read about them in the newspapers. Sometimes, we take it for granted.

But I remember. And I read Brianna's letters. And that's why I've got so much confidence in the future—because of you. I know that we've got young students like Brianna and Brendan. I know we've got workers like Steve who've proven that we're tougher than any kind of times that we might face. I'm confident because every one of you who clock in every day and work as hard as you can, not just for your own sake, but for the sake of this industry and for the sake of the country and because you take pride in what you do. And when you see that car rolling down the highway and you know, "Hey, I built that thing," and you know it's a great product, and it gives you a sense of being part of something bigger, that makes me confident about the future.

I'm hopeful about our future because of every single American that I've met who never stopped believing that the people who love this

country can change it for the better. You are what makes America great. And I want you to know that I have faith in you. And when I leave this office, I'll still have faith in you. And every day that I have the privilege of holding this office, I'm going to have faith in you.

And we're going to work side by side to make sure more folks got jobs and more folks got better wages and benefits and more people have the ability to join a union when they want to and more people are able to start businesses and more people have health benefits and more companies are thriving. And this country is going to keep on moving forward. And I know it's going to happen because of you.

Thank you, Detroit. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:49 p.m. at the UAW–GM Center for Human Resources. In his remarks, he referred to Cindy Estrada, vice president, International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW), and her son Jason White; former Rep. John D. Dingell, Jr.; Nicole Lurie, Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, Department of Health and Human Services; Tom Kartsotis, founder, Shinola; Teana Dowdell, employee, General Motors Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly facility; and Tolulope Sonuyi, physician, Henry Ford Health System.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process

January 20, 2016

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared with respect to foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process is to continue in effect beyond January 23, 2016.

The crisis with respect to grave acts of violence committed by foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process that led to the declaration of a national emergency on January 23, 1995, has not been resolved. Terrorist groups continue to engage in activities that have the purpose or effect of threatening the Middle East peace process and that are hostile to United States interests in the region. Such actions continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process and to maintain in force the sanctions against them to respond to this threat.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Paul D. Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks to the United States Conference of Mayors
January 21, 2016

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. Love you back. Everybody, have a seat, have a seat.

Well, Stephanie, thank you for that wonderful introduction. Welcome to the White House. It is great to see so many familiar faces, people who I have not only worked with, but who have become friends over the years. And I want to welcome all of our newly elected mayors as well. Congratulations. The rest of you, keep hazing to the minimum. [*Laughter*] If they tell you you've got to carry their stuff and all that, that's not true. So don't let them take advantage of you.

I'm not going to speak long at the outset, primarily because you already heard from Michelle, and I always suffer from the comparison. [*Laughter*] I know that she spoke to you today about ending veterans' homelessness, which is an issue that we all care so deeply about. But I did want to just make a few remarks at the top, and it echoes what Stephanie said in her introduction.

When I took office, I made it a priority to build a strong partnership with mayors in this room and all across the country. And thanks to all of you, America has made extraordinary progress over the past 7 years.

Mayors can't wait for Congress. Mayors can't get stuck in partisan gridlock. We've got Republican mayors here and Democratic mayors, but frankly, if you're a mayor, nobody cares what your party is, they care what you're getting done. You don't have time for a lot of bluster and baloney. [*Laughter*] Your constituents expect results.

And that's why I think on so many issues—from fighting for working families to combating climate change, to expanding high-tech jobs, to increasing the minimum wage—we have been able to work together to get a lot of things done. In fact, about 40 cities and counties have taken action to raise the minimum wage. Forty have taken action on paid family leave and paid sick leave. Twenty cities and counties are competing in our Healthy Communities Challenge to get more uninsured folks signed up for health coverage. From Little Rock to San Diego, cities are putting people to work retrofitting buildings so that they're more energy efficient. Earlier today my administration announced that we are going to award 13 cities, States, and counties $1 billion to help build more climate-resilient communities.

And unlike, sometimes, government officials at other levels, mayors understand that the services and the effectiveness of local governments and government generally is something that we can't take for granted, that we have to work for and fight for and invest in every single day.

Some of you know I was in Detroit yesterday, but the day before that, I was meeting with Mayor Weaver, newly elected in Flint, Michigan, to talk about what has been a inexcusable situation with respect to drinking water there. In last month's bipartisan budget agreement, we secured additional funding to help cities like yours build water infrastructure. And we're going to have that funding available to you by the end of next week, and that includes more than $80 million for the State of Michigan. Our children should not have to be worried about the water that they're drinking in American cities. That's not something that we should accept.

All of you are facing some chronic challenges. They preceded your term in office, and we don't expect that we're going to solve all of them immediately, but the goal here is consistently to make progress. One of those areas where we all have concerns is when it comes to violence on our streets and what happens to our young people. And here, again, we've been blessed with outstanding partnerships with so many of you.

In places like Columbia, South Carolina, Mayor Steve Benjamin is implementing recommendations from our Task Force on community policing. In Oak Creek, Mayor Steve

Scaffidi, after seeing a terrible tragedy of gun violence in his community, has been working to implement steps that can reduce gun violence in his area. The U.S. Conference of Mayors, understanding the importance of a global economy and making sure that U.S. businesses are creating U.S. jobs and that we're exporting, have been outstanding partners with us on promoting the trade—the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which is going to cut 18,000 taxes, tariffs, on American-made goods and products. And that means that we're going to be able to sell more to other people. They're already selling to us. We want to make sure that we're out there writing the rules of the road so that American businesses and American jobs are not left behind in one of the most dynamic, fastest growing regions of the world. So many of you have worked together with us on "My Brother's Keeper" and recognizing that we are going to have stronger cities, stronger states, and a stronger country if we make sure that every young person, particularly so many of our young men, are steered away from crime and away from prison and are getting the skills they need to live out productive lives.

So we've accomplished a lot together on behalf of the American people. I could not be prouder of the work that we've done together. There's a lot more that I want to get done this past—this last year. I still am pushing hard and we have, I think, a real opportunity to get criminal justice reform done this year. We have to work together to combat the scourge of opioids and heroin that is spreading through so many of our communities across the country. We still have a lot of work we can do to improve our schools. We can work together to break down rules that stand in the way of building new housing and that keep families from moving to growing, dynamic cities. And as I said last week, we need to keep fighting for a political system that reflects our best selves. And that, by the way, includes making it easier for people to vote, not harder.

So bottom line is, all of you are doing outstanding work. You are in the trenches every single day. You're not always getting a thank you; instead, you're getting why didn't you get that done. [*Laughter*] Or if you got it done, why didn't you get it done earlier. [*Laughter*] And I know the pace is relentless for mayors because people expect to see you every single day, but just in case you're feeling a little underappreciated—[*laughter*]—I hope that you understand how heartfelt my words of thanks are. I think that we have seen our cities take leadership and we have seen transformations of communities across this country. And when cities are strong, the States that they're in are strong. And when cities are strong, America is strong. You're helping to fuel that strength.

So thank you so much. I appreciate you. Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:02 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Stephanie C. Rawlings-Blake of Baltimore, MD, in her capacity as president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors; and Mayor Stephen Scaffidi of Oak Creek, WI.

Memorandum on Delegation of Authority Under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016

January 21, 2016

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Delegation of Authority under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, I hereby order as follows:

I hereby delegate functions and authorities vested in the President by section 1243 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 (Public Law 114–92) (the "Act") to the Secretary of State.

Any reference in this memorandum to the Act shall be deemed to be a reference to any future act that is the same or substantially the same as such provision.

You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: This memorandum was not received for publication in the *Federal Register*.

Statement on the 43d Anniversary of the Supreme Court Decision in *Roe* v. *Wade*
January 22, 2016

Today we mark the 43rd anniversary of the Supreme Court ruling in *Roe* v. *Wade*, which affirmed a woman's freedom to make her own choices about her body and her health. The decision supports the broader principle that the government should not intrude on private decisions made between a woman and her doctor. As we commemorate this day, we also redouble our commitment to protecting these constitutional rights, including protecting a woman's access to safe, affordable health care and her right to reproductive freedom from efforts to undermine or overturn them. In America, every single one of us deserves the rights, freedoms, and opportunities to fulfill our dreams.

Statement on the Crash of Two United States Marine Corps CH–53E Helicopters in Hawaii
January 22, 2016

On behalf of all Americans, Michelle and I extend our deepest sympathies to the families of the 12 marines missing from an apparent helicopter accident along the Hawaiian coast. As we mourn this loss, we are reminded of the sacrifice men and women of our Armed Forces make each day for the freedom and security of their fellow Americans. The willingness of our troops to complete dangerous training to prepare for any mission our Nation asks of them will not be forgotten.

The spirit of our missing marines was reflected in the actions of the many dozens of servicemembers and others in Hawaii who searched day and night for the downed helicopters. Communities from coast to coast are mourning these marines, and our Nation is forever grateful for their patriotism, service, and sacrifice. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families and loved ones at this difficult hour.

The President's Weekly Address
January 23, 2016

Hi, everybody. When I took office 7 years ago this week, more than 15 percent of Americans went without health insurance. For folks who did have coverage, insurance companies could deny you coverage or charge you more just because you'd been sick. And too many Americans gave up their dream of changing jobs or going back to school because they couldn't risk giving up their employer-based insurance plan.

We've changed that. As the Affordable Care Act has taken effect, nearly 18 million

Americans have gained coverage. In fact, for the first time ever, more than 90 percent of Americans are covered. Up to 129 million Americans with preexisting conditions no longer face the risk of being denied coverage or being charged more just because they've been sick. A hundred and thirty-seven million Americans with private insurance are now guaranteed preventive care coverage. We've done all this while cutting our deficits and keeping health care inflation to its lowest levels in 50 years. And we've begun filling the gaps in employer-based care so that when we change jobs, lose a job, go back to school, or start that new business, we can still get coverage.

If you want to know how important that is, just ask an American like Heather Bragg. Heather's a small-business owner in Bluffton, South Carolina. Last year, she wrote me a letter and told me how, for years, her family had depended on her husband's job for their insurance. But thanks to the Affordable Care Act, her husband Mike had the freedom to switch jobs and join Heather at the small business she'd launched a few years ago.

Through the health insurance marketplace, they found better coverage that actually saved them hundreds of dollars a month. Today, Heather only pays about $10 for the asthma inhaler she needs. "For the first time," Heather wrote, "we're not living paycheck to paycheck; we're able to pay our bills and put some money back into savings." And because Mike doesn't have to work nights or weekends anymore, he can coach their son's soccer team and tuck the kids in at night. And you can't put a price on something like that.

If you haven't looked at your new coverage options, you've still got time to get covered on the health insurance marketplace for 2016. In fact, you have until January 31, next Sunday, to enroll. Just go to healthcare.gov or cuidadodesalud.gov or call 1–800–318–2596. Most folks buying a plan on the marketplace can find an option that costs less than $75 a month. Even if you already have insurance, take a few minutes to shop around. In fact, consumers who switched to a new plan for 2016 ended up saving an average of more than $500.

That's what the Affordable Care Act did. This is health care in America today: affordable, portable security for you and your loved ones. It's making a difference for millions of Americans every day. And it's only going to get better. Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:05 p.m. on January 22 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on January 23. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 22, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 23. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Ceremony Honoring Recipients of the Righteous Among the Nations Medal at the Embassy of Israel
January 27, 2016

Thank you. Good evening. *Erev tov.* [*Laughter*]

The Talmud teaches that if a person destroys one life, it is as if they've destroyed an entire world, and if a person saves one life, it is as if they've saved an entire world. What an extraordinary honor to be with you as we honor four righteous individuals whose courage is measured in the lives they saved—one child, one refugee, one comrade at a time—and who, in so doing, helped save our world.

I deliver a lot of speeches. Very rarely am I so humbled by the eloquence that has preceded me, and not just in words, but in the acts that we commemorate today.

To my dear friend Steven Spielberg, thanks for your moving and generous words. You spoke of the importance of finding your voice and using it for good, and I know that your work—whether a masterpiece like "Schindler's List" or the stories that you have so persistently

preserved through the Shoah Foundation—is deeply personal. Steven once said that the story of the Shoah is the story that he was born to tell, rooted in those childhood memories that he just gave you a taste of: the relatives lost, the stories you heard from your family. And, Steven, the whole world is grateful that you found your voice, and for the good that you've done with that voice. It will endure for generations. And so, on behalf of all of us, we are grateful.

To Ambassador and Mrs. Dermer, to Nina Totenberg, our friends from the Israeli Embassy and Yad Vashem: Thank you so much for hosting us today.

Let me just add tonight that our thoughts are also with former Israeli President Shimon Peres. I had the opportunity to speak with Shimon earlier this week. I thanked him for his friendship, which has always meant so much to me personally. And I thanked him once again for the shining example of his leadership. With his extraordinary life—in the Haganah and as a founding father of the State of Israel, a statesman who has never given up on peace, an embodiment of the great alliance between our two nations—Shimon inspires us all. And this evening we speak for all of us—Israelis, Americans, people around the world—in wishing him a full and speedy recovery.

I also want to just note the presence of two of our outstanding Senators from the great State of Tennessee. I know that it's rare where you have such a extraordinary native of the State being honored in this way, but I think it's also worth noting that this represents the bipartisan and steadfast support of Members of Congress for the security and prosperity of the State of Israel. And they act on that every single day.

The survivors, families of the righteous and those they saved, to all the distinguished guests: We gather to honor the newest of the Righteous Among the Nations and make real the call to "never forget," not just on this Day of Remembrance, but for all days and for all time.

And at moments like this, as I listened to the extraordinary stories of the four that we honor, memories come rushing back of the times that I've encountered the history and the horror of the Shoah: growing up, hearing the stories of my great uncle who helped liberate Ohrdruf, part of Buchenwald, and who returned home so shaken by the suffering that he had seen that my grandmother would tell me he did not speak to anyone for 6 months, just went up in his attic, couldn't fully absorb the horror that he had witnessed.

Then having the opportunity to go to Buchenwald myself with my dear friend Elie Wiesel, and seeing the ovens, the Little Camp where he was held as a boy. Standing with survivors in the old Warsaw Ghetto. And then the extraordinary honor of walking through Yad Vashem with Rabbi Lau and seeing the faces and hearing the voices of the lost of blessed memory. And then, taking my own daughters to visit the Holocaust Museum, because our children must know this chapter of our history and that we must never repeat it.

The four lives we honor tonight make a claim on our conscience, as well as our moral imagination. We hear their stories, and we are forced to ask ourselves, under the same circumstances, how would we act? How would we answer God's question, where are you? Would we show the love of Walery and Maryla Zbijewski? [*Laughter*] Not bad, right? There, in Warsaw, they could have been shot for opening their home to a 5-year-old girl. Yet they cared for her like one of their own, gave her safety and shelter and moments of warmth, of family and music, a shield from the madness outside until her mother could return.

Would we have the extraordinary compassion of Lois Gunden? She wrote that she simply hoped to "add just another ray of love to the lives of these youngsters" who had already endured so much. And by housing and feeding as many Jewish children as she could, her ray of love always shone through and still burns within the families of those she saved.

Would we have the courage of Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds? I know your dad said he was just doing his job, but he went above and beyond the call of duty, and so did all those who joined in that line. Faced with a choice of giving up his fellow soldiers or saving

his own life, Roddie looked evil in the eye and dared a Nazi to shoot. His moral compass never wavered. He was true to his faith, and he saved some 200 Jewish American soldiers as a consequence. It's an instructive lesson, by the way, for those of us Christians. I cannot imagine a greater expression of Christianity to say, I, too, am a Jew.

And I ask these questions because, even as the Holocaust is unique, a crime without parallel in history, the seeds of hate that gave rise to the Shoah—the ignorance that conspires with arrogance, the indifference that betrays compassion—those seeds have always been with us. They have found root across cultures and across faiths and across generations. The Ambassador mentioned the story of Cain and Abel. It's deep within us. And too often, especially in times of change, especially in times of anxiety and uncertainty, we are too willing to give into a base desire to find someone else—someone different—to blame for our struggles.

So here, tonight we must confront the reality that around the world, anti-Semitism is on the rise. We cannot deny it. When we see some Jews leaving European cities, where their families have lived for generations, because they no longer feel safe; when Jewish centers are targeted from Mumbai to Overland Park, Kansas; when swastikas appear on college campuses—when we see all that and more, we must not be silent.

An attack on any faith is an attack on all of our faiths. It is an attack on that Golden Rule at the heart of so many faiths: that we ought to do unto others as we would have done to us. For Americans, in particular, we should understand that it's an attack on our diversity, on the very idea that people of different backgrounds can live together and thrive together. Which is why—your father was right—we are all Jews. Because anti-Semitism is a distillation, an expression of an evil that runs through so much of human history, and if we do not answer that, we do not answer any other form of evil. When any Jew anywhere is targeted just for being Jewish, we all have to respond as Roddie Edmonds did: "We are all Jews."

We know that we'll never be able to wipe out hatred from every single mind. We won't entirely erase the scourge of anti-Semitism. But like the righteous, we must do everything we can. All of us have a responsibility.

Certainly, Government has a responsibility. As President, I've made sure that the United States is leading the global fight against anti-Semitism. And it's why, with Israel and countries around the world, we organized the first United Nations General Assembly meeting on anti-Semitism. It's why we've urged other nations to dedicate a Special Envoy to this threat, as we have.

It's why, when a statue of an anti-Semitic leader from World War II was planned in Hungary, we led the charge to convince their Government to reverse course. This was not a side note to our relations with Hungary, this was central to maintaining a good relationship with the United States, and we let them know.

It's why, when voices around the world veer from criticism of a particular Israeli policy to an unjust denial of Israel's right to exist, when Israel faces terrorism, we stand up forcefully and proudly in defense of our ally, in defense of our friend, in defense of the Jewish State of Israel. America's commitment to Israel's security remains, now and forever, unshakeable. And I've said this before: It would be a fundamental moral failing if America broke that bond.

All nations that prize diversity and tolerance and pluralism must speak out whenever and wherever Jews and other religious minorities are attacked. In recent years, we've seen leaders in France, Germany, and Great Britain stand strongly against anti-Semitism. In Israel, President Rivlin has spoken eloquently about the need for tolerance and acceptance among all Israelis, Jewish and Arab.

Meanwhile, Governments have an obligation to care for the survivors of the Shoah, because no one who endured that horror should have to scrape by in their golden years. So, with our White House initiative, we're working to improve care for Holocaust survivors in need here in the United States. And with the compensation fund we helped to create, claims

are finally being paid that even more Jews deported from France during the Holocaust, including survivors here in America, can benefit from.

But the task before us does not fall on Government alone. Every faith community has a responsibility. And just as all religions speak out against those who try to twist their faith to justify terrorism and violence, just as all faiths need to speak out when interpretations of their religion veer in an ugly direction, so too must they speak out against those who use their faith to justify bias against Jews or people of any faith.

We know that there were Muslims—from Albanians to Arabs—who protected Jews from Nazis. In Morocco, leaders from Muslim-majority countries around the world just held a summit on protecting religious minorities, including Jews and Christians. His Holiness Pope Francis has spoken forcefully against anti-Semitism, saying, "Every human being, as a creature of God, is our brother, regardless of his origins or religious beliefs." These are the voices we must heed. And anyone who claims to be a religious leader must project that vision, that truth.

And finally, all of us have a responsibility to speak out and to teach what's right to our children and to examine our own hearts. That's the lesson of the righteous we honor today, the lesson of the Holocaust itself: Where are you? Who are you? That's the question that the Holocaust poses to us. We have to consider—even in moments of peril, even when we might fear for our own lives—the fact that none of us are powerless. We always have a choice. And today, for most of us, standing up against intolerance doesn't require the same risks that those we honor today took. It doesn't require imprisonment or that we face down the barrel of a gun. It does require us to speak out. It does require us to stand firm. We know that evil can flourish if we stand idly by.

And so we're called to live in a way that shows that we've actually learned from our past. And that means rejecting indifference. It means cultivating a habit of empathy and recognizing ourselves in one another; to make common cause with the outsider, the minority, whether that minority is Christian or Jew, whether it is Hindu or Muslim or a nonbeliever; whether that minority is native born or immigrant; whether they're Israeli or Palestinian.

It means taking a stand against bigotry in all its forms and rejecting our darkest impulses and guarding against tribalism as the only value in our communities and in our politics. It means heeding the lesson repeated so often in the Torah—to welcome the stranger—for we were once strangers too. That's how we never forget: not simply by keeping the lessons of the Shoah in our memories, but by living them in our actions. As the book of Deuteronomy teaches us, *"Tzedek, Tzedek tirdof"*—"Justice, Justice you shall pursue."

I want to close with what I'm told is a Jewish legend. It's said that within every generation there are 36 virtuous individuals: individuals so honorable, so filled with compassion, that their good works sustain the very existence of the world. They are called *Lamed Vovniks,* and without them, society crumbles, according to the legend. We don't know who they are. They're entirely indistinguishable, ordinary people, like Walery and Maryla and Lois and Roddie. You wouldn't necessarily recognize them in a crowd. But I believe that their generation—the generation of Schindler and Wallenberg and Karski—demanded a lot more than 36. It called for more than 26,000 Righteous Among the Nations. It called for the millions of heroes who did not go quietly and who stood up and fought back.

And may we all strive to live up to their noble example, to be the *Lamed Vovniks* of our generation, to do our part to sustain each other and to embrace the humanity that we share, and in so doing, save our world. May the memory of the lost be a blessing. And as nations and individuals, may we always strive be among the righteous.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America. And God bless the State of Israel.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:54 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to filmmaker Steven A. Spielberg, in his capacity as honorary chair of

the USC Shoah Foundation; Israel's Ambassador to the U.S. Ron Dermer and his wife Rhoda P. Dermer; Nina Totenberg, legal affairs correspondent, NPR; Sens. Lamar A. Alexander, Jr., and Robert P. Corker, Jr.; Nobel Prize winner, author, and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel; Israel Meir Lau, chairman, Yad Vashem Council; and New York City resident Elizabeth Wilk, who sought shelter with Walery and Maryla Zbijewski in Warsaw, Poland, during the Nazi occupation and later emigrated to the U.S.

Remarks at the House Democratic Issues Conference in Baltimore, Maryland

January 28, 2016

President Obama. Thank you so much! Thank you! All right, everybody, sit down. Sit down. You're going to make me choke up. [*Laughter*]

Well, it's good to see you, Democrats. Everybody is looking good. To not only the Members, but the families and folks who are here, staff, everybody who does such hard work, it is wonderful to be with you again.

And I want to obviously start off by just thanking somebody who I believe will go down as one of the finest Democratic leaders and Speakers we've ever had, my dear friend, Nancy Pelosi—[*applause*]—who also has adorable grandchildren. I mean, it's hard to find more photogenic grandkids. [*Laughter*] I'm telling you, they look like they just jumped out of a magazine.

To the rest of the leadership—Steny, Jim, Xavier, so many others who have worked with the White House to make a profound difference in the lives of the American people—I am looking forward to 1 more year of hard work and fulfilling work. And I know that the Carolina and Colorado delegations may be a little distracted right now—[*laughter*]—by the Super Bowl and the bets that they are laying. If it's buffalo versus barbecue, I'm in. [*Laughter*] But I wish you guys all the luck, and I congratulate you on unbelievable championship games.

Audience member. Go Broncos!

The President. There you go.

Audience member. Roll Tide!

The President. She's still talking about Alabama. That was a couple weeks ago. [*Laughter*]

So I'm not going to speak long because I want to make sure that we have a chance for Q&A, and I just had a long discussion with a lot of you and the American people in the State of the Union. Obviously, it is election season. The press has been focused on debates and divisions that they can drum up within the primary and within our party. I'm not worried, though, about this party staying united. The other side may have some stuff to work out,—[*laughter*]—but our trajectory is clear. And everyone's scouring my every word to find some deeper meaning, see if I'm trying to put my finger on the scales, so let me simplify things. Tonight I have an announcement to make about the Presidential race: Democrats will win in November, and we will have a Democratic President succeeding me. Just in case there's any confusion about that.

And the reason I can say that with confidence is because we focus on the things that matter in the lives of the American people. Think about the four questions that I posed during the State of the Union. How do we give everybody a fair shot at opportunity and security in this new economy? How do we harness the American spirit of innovation to solve some of our biggest challenges? How do we keep America safe and lead the world without becoming the world's policeman? And how do we make sure that our politics reflect what's best in us, not what's worst?

Our party has the right answers to each of these questions. We've shown that during these past 7 years. As Democrats, we believe everybody who works hard should have a fair shot. Our policies rescued the economy from the worst crisis in generations. We have now seen the longest streak of private sector job

creation in our history, more than 14 million new jobs. The best 2 years of job growth since the last time a Democrat was in the White House. Nearly 18 million Americans newly covered by health insurance.

Sometimes, I get a little frustrated that we don't run back the tape to what the Republicans said back then. Because at each juncture, every single one of the steps we took, they said the opposite, wanted to go in a different direction, claimed that our policies would crush jobs and destroy the economy. Do people remember that?

Audience members. Yes.

The President. They said gas would be at $6.50 a gallon—pull up the quotes. Right now it's around a buck-eighty. They said deficits would explode. We cut them by almost three-quarters. My opponent in the last election promised 6-percent unemployment by the end of 2016. We got it to 5 percent by the end of 2015. Our policies are the ones that worked.

So we can't let Republicans roll back this progress by letting big banks or Big Oil or hedge funds make their own rules at the expense of everybody else. We can't let attacks on collective bargaining go unanswered. We have to build on the progress we've made with education and training for jobs that pay a good wage, with benefits and protections, that make sure these jobs provide a basic measure of security.

And by the way, one of the things that I've talked about many of you—with many of you is the deepening problem in Puerto Rico that threatens the well-being of 3.5 million Americans. My administration has put forward a comprehensive proposal to give Puerto Rico the necessary tools to address its crisis, create a path to recovery. And the most urgent tool that we need right now, a comprehensive restructuring authority, costs taxpayers nothing and will help more Americans regain control of their own economic security. That's the kind of thing that Democrats believe in.

It's why we support a minimum wage. That's why we support paid leave. That's why we support making sure that working families, not folks who are doing just fine, have access to the opportunities that the economy—this new economy is generating. And on the other side, other than some slogans, you do not hear a single policy that they're putting forward that you can say would help middle class families or help working class families. That's what this election is about.

As Democrats, we believe in science. I know it's a radical proposition. [*Laughter*] We believe in the power of American ingenuity and innovation. And over the past 7 years, our policies have helped put tens of thousands of Americans to work in clean energy jobs that pay better than average. We've been able to double the amount of clean energy that we generate. In some parts of the country, wind power, solar power are now cheaper than dirty fossil fuels. We've cut our oil imports by nearly 60 percent, and we've cut our total carbon pollution more than any other nation on Earth. That's what we've done.

So we can't let Republicans roll this progress back by giving fossil fuel companies the ability to run roughshod and destroy our environment for future generations. And rather than subsidize the past, we should be investing in the future and the incredible opportunities that come with it. That's what we're focused on, that's what all Democrats believe in.

As Democrats, our top national security priority and the thing that I think about every single day when I wake up is how do we protect the American people and keep them safe from terrorist attacks. And for more than a year, America has led a coalition of more than 60 countries to hunt down and destroy ISIL, including with nearly 10,000 airstrikes.

We're not going to build progress with a bunch of phony tough talk and bluster and over the top claims that just play into ISIL's hands. We're not going to strengthen our leadership around the world by allowing politicians to insult Muslims or pit groups of Americans against each other. That's not who we are. That's not keeping America safe.

Keeping America safe and strong and respected requires us using every element of our power. That's how we worked to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran. And again, you will recall

that the other side was claiming this would never work, they were going to cheat. And yet, a few months later, we now know—have certified—that massive amounts of existing nuclear stockpiles and their infrastructure has been dismantled or shipped out.

And even those who were skeptical are now having to admit that, without firing a shot, we achieved something that all of us had an interest in and had been working on for years. That's how we stopped the spread of Ebola in West Africa: our leadership, our military, our public health workers, our scientists. That's why we're ending 50 years of failed policy by restoring diplomatic relations to Cuba. That is true strength and true leadership, and that's what we believe in.

And we believe that our politics should reflect what's best in us. You know, I'm not going to claim Democrats are perfect. I'm not going to claim that we're right on every single issue or we have a monopoly on wisdom. But I do know that we hold ourselves to a higher standard. We know that we've got to do better. But we believe that there are structural problems in our democracy that we can fix, that there's too much money in our politics, that a true democracy doesn't try to discourage people from voting, but in fact, tries to encourage people from voting and participating and making sure their voice is heard.

Because we believe that every vote and every voice matters—whether it's Black or White or Hispanic or Asian or Native American, gay, straight, people with disabilities—that everybody's voice matters, everybody's voice counts. That's what we fought for. That's why John Lewis is sitting here today.

We believe that no matter who you are, where you got your start, what your first name—what your last name is, what ZIP Code you were born in, that you deserve a shot at opportunity and success. That's what we believe. And we believe, yes, that government has a role to play in making that happen, to giving a hand up to people. If we stay true to those principles, our party is not just going to have a good year, America will have a good year. And we'll have more good years after that, and we'll build for future generations to come.

During this election season, there is a lot of noise and a lot of talk about America in decline, and as I said at the State of the Union, I don't believe it, and the facts don't show it.

Audience member. That's right.

The President. We're doing a lot better than we were 7, 8 years ago, and we've got a long way to go, but the same approach that we've taken of listening to the daily struggles and hopes and aspirations of people and making sure those voices are represented in the corridors of power and making sure that the laws that we seek to pass are ones that are going to help them and not a bunch of special interests who are trying to either hang onto what they already got or get more that they don't need—that's what the Democratic Party stands for.

That's why I'm so proud to have worked with all of you. I've said this in interviews. Yes, Democrats aren't perfect, but you know, we are on the right side of this debate. And we're not cynical. We genuinely believe that everybody should get a shot because most of us had to struggle and work hard, and we watched our parents and our grandparents and others work hard. We believe in immigration reform because we remember the history of our own families coming to this country and how they were able to forge a better life. We care about health care because we remember what it was like for somebody in our family, if they didn't have health care and couldn't pay the bills and didn't get decent care. We care about the minimum wage because a bunch of us worked in minimum-wage jobs and remembered what it was like to try to scrimp and save. And we care about making sure college is affordable because a lot of us here benefited from loans and grants and support. Otherwise, we wouldn't have gotten an education, because we weren't born with a silver spoon. That's what we stand for, that's what we believe in.

I could not be prouder of the work this caucus has done. I could not be prouder of the partnership I've had with you. And I intend to spend every minute every day between now and January 20 of next year making sure that

your legacy continues, not just mine, because that's what the American people need. That's what they deserve. So let's get to work.

Thank you, everybody. All right. Appreciate you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:28 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Baltimore Inner Harbor hotel. In his remarks, he referred to House Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer, Assistant Democratic Leader James E. Clyburn, and Democratic Caucus Chairman Xavier Becerra; former President William J. Clinton; and 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks Commemorating the Seventh Anniversary of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act

January 29, 2016

Thank you, everybody. Everybody, have a seat. Thank you so much. I heard you all were in the house so I wanted to stop by. [*Laughter*]

We've got some important personages here, so let me just call them out. We've got Senator Amy Klobuchar. Where's Amy? There she is. Our outstanding Labor Secretary Tom Perez. The Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Jenny Yang, is here. One of my favorites, the outstanding Billie Jean King is in the house. And of course, Lilly Ledbetter is here. Lilly has just become a dear friend to our family, and I can tell you that she's beloved not just by us, but by all the staff that work with her. She's just terrific. As she just mentioned, she was by my side when I signed my first bill into law, the Lilly Ledbetter Pay Fair—Fair Pay Act. And I was looking at a picture of that wonderful event, and she looks the same. [*Laughter*] And I don't. [*Laughter*]

But while we've got a lot to celebrate that day, we knew that our work wasn't done. We knew we had a lot more to do to close the pay gap between men and women and ensure that no woman would ever face the kind of discrimination that Lilly faced on the job.

And everybody here knows the numbers, and many of you have experienced it. Today, women account for almost half of the workforce. But the typical woman who works full time still earns 79 cents for every dollar that the typical man does. The gap is even wider for women of color. The typical Black working woman makes only 60 cents. The typical Latino woman makes only 55 cents for every dollar a White man earns. And that's not right. We're talking about oftentimes folks doing the same job and being paid differently. And it means that women are not getting the fair shot that we believe every single American deserves.

It doesn't just offend our values. At a time when women are increasingly the breadwinners in our households, paying them less makes it harder for families to cover the necessities like childcare or health care, just to pay the bills. It makes it harder for a family to save, harder for families to retire. It means local businesses have customers with less money to spend. So it's not good for our communities. It's not good for our families. It's not good for our businesses. What kind of example does paying women less set for our sons and daughters?

So today we're taking one more step in the right direction. We are proposing to collect and report pay data by race, ethnicity, and gender from businesses with 100 employees or more. And the goal is to help businesses that are trying to do the right thing, like the ones here today, to get a clearer picture of how they can ensure their employees are being treated equally. A better picture of the data will also help us do a better job enforcing existing equal pay laws.

Now, this won't solve every problem. We've still got to get more women and girls into high-paying fields like science and technology, engineering and math. We've still got to make sure that women are not penalized or held back in the workplace simply for starting a family.

Guys, we're responsible for the family thing too. [*Laughter*] And they're already doing more work than we are in getting that thing going. They shouldn't be penalized twice or three times. [*Laughter*]

We still need to raise the minimum wage, guarantee sick—[*applause*]—guaranteed paid sick and family leave, fully protecting pregnant workers, finally passing the Paycheck Fairness Act to give workers more tools to fight pay discrimination.

And all of us have to make sure that all of our young girls know that we're invested in their success. And by the way, I do want to emphasize there are businesses that are doing the right thing. We've got a good friend of ours, Marc Benioff, CEO of salesforce.com, which is consistently shown as one of the companies people most like to work for. And part of the reason is, is that Marc understands that his company thrives when he is drawing from the entire pool of talent out there and making sure that everybody is having a chance to thrive and succeed at his company. And when people see that, they're working harder and more productive and more enthusiastic. And ultimately, they make more money.

So this is not an either-or proposition, this is a win-win situation proposition if we think about it in the right way. That's part of what Billie Jean taught us so many years ago. I mean, those of you who are tennis fans, let's face it, a lot of times the women's tournaments are more interesting than men's. [*Laughter*] And the notion that somehow we would be keeping my daughters or Marc's daughters or any of your daughters out of opportunity, not allowing them to thrive in every field, not letting them fully participate in every human endeavor, that's counterproductive. That's not how we're going to build a great future for our country.

So that's why, this May, the White House Council on Women and Girls will lead a day focused on women in America and around the world. And we're going to bring people from all across the country to examine the progress that we've made and the work that remains to give every woman and girl in this country a fair shot at success. And we're going to keep pushing until every single girl has the rights and the opportunities and the freedom to go as far as her dreams will take her.

This will be a long haul. One of the things that I am consistently reminding young people when they're working here in the White House is that social change never happens overnight. It is a slog. And there are times where you just have to chip away and chip away, and then suddenly, there may be some breakthroughs. But it's reliant on all of us to keep pushing that boulder up the hill, to just be steady and persistent and understand that the work that we do today is ultimately going to lead to a better future tomorrow.

And we will not see necessarily all the fruits of that labor. The same way that Lilly described her endeavors—when she lost that court case, she could have given up, but she didn't. And that spirit is what all of us have to adopt. That's the spirit that built America. That's the spirit that opened up opportunity for so many more people than a generation ago. And that's the spirit that I intend to keep pushing as long as I have the privilege to be in this office. All right?

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:19 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to former professional tennis player Billie Jean King, founder, Billie Jean King Leadership Initiative; and Lilly Ledbetter, former employee, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. plant in Gadsden, AL

Statement on the Resignation of Katherine Beirne Fallon as White House Director of Legislative Affairs
January 29, 2016

Republicans and Democrats in Congress have their differences, but when it comes to Katie, they're united in their admiration and respect. She came into her role at a time when we needed to build up our relationships with folks in both parties. And from bipartisan budget agreements to protecting a deal that will prevent a nuclear Iran, to ensuring the long-stalled Ex-Im and IMF reforms were enacted, we simply could not have made the progress we've made without her. It's never easy to lose a close adviser, and it's even harder when they've become a good friend. That said, there's nobody better prepared to step into this role than Amy Rosenbaum, and I'm very pleased she's agreed to serve as my next head of Legislative Affairs.

NOTE: The statement referred to Deputy Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs Amy Rosenbaum. It also referred to the Export-Import Bank of the United States.

The President's Weekly Address
January 30, 2016

Hi, everybody. As I said in my State of the Union Address, we live in a time of extraordinary change, change that's affecting the way we live and the way we work. New technology replaces any job where work can be automated. Workers need more skills to get ahead. These changes aren't new, and they're only going to accelerate. So the question we have to ask ourselves is, how can we make sure everyone has a fair shot at success in this new economy?

The answer to that question starts with education. That's why my administration has encouraged States to raise standards. We've cut the digital divide in our classrooms by half. We've worked with Congress to pass a bipartisan bill to set the expectation that every student should graduate from high school ready for college and a good job. And thanks to the hard work of students, teachers, and parents across the country, our high school graduation rate is at an alltime high.

Now we have to make sure all our kids are equipped for the jobs of the future, which means not just being able to work with computers, but developing the analytical and coding skills to power our innovation economy. Today's auto mechanics aren't just sliding under cars to change the oil, they're working on machines that run on as many as a hundred million lines of code. That's a hundred times more than the space shuttle. Nurses are analyzing data and managing electronic health records. Machinists are writing computer programs. And workers of all kinds need to be able to figure out how to break a big problem into smaller pieces and identify the right steps to solve it.

In the new economy, computer science isn't an optional skill, it's a basic skill, right along with the three R's. Nine out of ten parents want it taught to their child in school. Yet right now only a quarter of our K-through-12 schools offer computer science. Twenty-two States don't even allow it to count toward a diploma.

So I've got a plan to help make sure all our kids get an opportunity to learn computer science, especially girls and minorities. It's called Computer Science for All. And it means just what it says: giving every student in America an early start at learning the skills they need to get ahead in the new economy.

First, I'm asking Congress to provide funding so that our elementary, middle, and high schools can provide opportunities to learn computer science for all students. Second, starting this year, we're leveraging existing

resources at the National Science Foundation and the Corporation for National and Community Service to train more great teachers for these courses. And third, I'll be pulling together Governors, mayors, business leaders, and tech entrepreneurs to join the growing bipartisan movement around this cause. Americans of all kinds are getting involved, from students teaching each other to code, to teachers adding programming to their classes. And just today States like Delaware and Hawaii, companies like Google and Salesforce, and organizations like Code.org have made commitments to help more of our kids learn these skills.

That's what this is all about: each of us doing our part to make sure all our young people can compete in a high-tech, global economy. They're the ones who will make sure America—the country that invented all this stuff in the first place—keeps growing, keeps innovating, and keeps leading the world in the years ahead. And they're the reason I've never been more confident about our future.

Thanks everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:25 p.m. on January 29 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on January 30. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 29, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 30. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the United States-Hungary Social Security Agreement
February 1, 2016

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act, as amended by the Social Security Amendments of 1977 (Public Law 95–216, 42 U.S.C. 433(e)(1)), I transmit herewith a social security totalization agreement with Hungary, titled, "Agreement on Social Security between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Hungary," and a related agreement titled, "Administrative Arrangement for the Implementation of the Agreement on Social Security between the United States of America and the Government of Hungary" (collectively the "Agreements"). The Agreements were signed in Budapest, Hungary, on February 3, 2015.

The Agreements are similar in objective to the social security agreements already in force with most European Union countries, Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, Norway, the Republic of Korea, and Switzerland. Such bilateral agreements provide for limited coordination between the United States and foreign social security systems to eliminate dual social security coverage and taxation, and to help prevent the lost benefit protection that can occur when workers divide their careers between two countries.

The Agreements contain all provisions mandated by section 233 of the Social Security Act and the provisions that I deem appropriate to carry out the purposes of section 233, pursuant to section 233(c)(4) of the Social Security Act.

I also transmit for the information of the Congress a report required by section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act on the estimated number of individuals who will be affected by the Agreements and the estimated cost effect. The Department of State and the Social Security Administration have recommended the Agreements to me.

I commend the Agreements and related documents.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 1, 2016.

Statement on the European Reassurance Initiative
February 2, 2016

Since the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine almost 2 years ago, the United States has taken decisive and sustained steps to assure our allies and bolster NATO's collective defense capabilities in light of a changing European security environment. Under the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), we have increased the U.S. military presence in Europe, conducted additional bilateral and multilateral exercises, improved U.S. and allied military infrastructure in Europe, pre-positioned more U.S. equipment in Europe, and intensified efforts to build the capacity and interoperability of allies and partners. ERI has provided funding for Operation Atlantic Resolve, by which U.S. forces have maintained a persistent air, maritime, and ground presence in Central and Eastern Europe. Together with our allies, the United States has also taken important steps to implement the readiness action plan, a package of measures to assure allies and adapt NATO to its long-term military requirements, which was agreed at the 2014 Wales summit in light of the aggressive posture that Russia has taken on the alliance's periphery.

These steps were all necessary, but they are not sufficient. The alliance has more work to do. As we approach the 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw, it is clear that the United States and our allies must do more to advance our common defense in support of a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace. That is why today my administration announced a four-fold increase in ERI funding for fiscal year 2017. An ERI funding level of $3.4 billion will enable the United States to strengthen our robust military posture in Europe and improve our ability to uphold our article 5 commitments to NATO members. It should make clear that America will stand firm with its allies in defending not just NATO territory, but also shared principles of international law and order.

This is a challenging and important time for NATO, a cornerstone of transatlantic security that is increasingly called upon to be a cornerstone of global security. NATO is necessarily evolving to meet a range of challenges, not just to its east, but also to its south, where civil war and failing states continue to fuel mass migration and terrorism. All 28 NATO allies are members of the counter-ISIL coalition, and NATO allies and partners must continue to work together to support the Afghan national defense and security forces. This budget request ensures that the United States is prepared to meet its commitments to NATO and should be a reminder that every ally must properly resource its defense and invest in the capabilities our alliance requires.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the District of Columbia's Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Request
February 2, 2016

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to my constitutional authority and as contemplated by section 446 of the District of Columbia Self-Government and Governmental Reorganization Act as amended in 1989, I am transmitting the District of Columbia's fiscal year (FY) 2016 Budget and Financial Plan. This transmittal does not represent an endorsement of the contents of the D.C. government's requests.

The proposed FY 2016 Budget and Financial Plan reflects the major programmatic objectives of the Mayor and the Council of the District of Columbia. For FY 2016, the District estimates total revenues and expenditures of $13.0 billion.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 2, 2016.

Remarks at the Islamic Society of Baltimore in Catonsville, Maryland
February 3, 2016

Well, good afternoon. And, Sabah, thank you for the wonderful introduction and for your example: your devotion to your faith and your education and your service to others. You're an inspiration. You're going to be a fantastic doctor. And I suspect, Sabah, your parents are here because they wanted to see you so—where are Sabah's parents? There you go. Yay! Let's give—good job, Mom. She did great, didn't she? She was terrific.

To everyone here at the Islamic Society of Baltimore, thank you for welcoming me here today. I want to thank Muslim American leaders from across this city and this State, and some who traveled even from out of State to be here. I want to recognize Congressman John Sarbanes, who is here, as well as two other great leaders in Congress and proud Muslim Americans: Congressman Keith Ellison from the great State of Minnesota and Congressman Andre Carson from the great State of Indiana.

This mosque, like so many in our country, is an all-American story. You've been part of this city for nearly half a century. You serve thousands of families, some who've lived here for decades, as well as immigrants from many countries who've worked to become proud American citizens.

Now, a lot of Americans have never visited a mosque. And to the folks watching this today who haven't, think of your own church or synagogue or temple, and a mosque like this will be very familiar. This is where families come to worship and express their love for God and for each other. There's a school where teachers open young minds. Kids play baseball and football and basketball—boys and girls—I hear they're pretty good. [*Laughter*] Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts meet, recite the Pledge of Allegiance here.

With interfaith dialogues, you build bridges of understanding with other faith communities, Christians and Jews. There's a health clinic that serves the needy, regardless of their faith. And members of this community are out in the broader community, working for social justice and urban development. As voters, you come here to meet candidates. As one of your members said, "Just look at the way we live: We are true Americans."

So the first thing I want to say is two words that Muslim Americans don't hear often enough, and that is, thank you. Thank you for serving your community. Thank you for lifting up the lives of your neighbors and for helping keep us strong and united as one American family. We are grateful for that.

Now, this brings me to the other reason I wanted to come here today. I know that in Muslim communities across our country, this is a time of concern and, frankly, a time of some fear. Like all Americans, you're worried about the threat of terrorism. But on top of that, as Muslim Americans, you also have another concern, and that is, your entire community so often is targeted or blamed for the violent acts of the very few.

And the Muslim American community remains relatively small: several million people in this country. And as a result, most Americans don't necessarily know—or at least, don't know that they know—a Muslim personally. And as a result, many only hear about Muslims and Islam from the news after an act of terrorism or in distorted media portrayals in TV or film, all of which gives this hugely distorted impression.

And since 9/11, but more recently, since the attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, you've seen—too often—people conflating the horrific acts of terrorism with the beliefs of an entire faith. And of course, recently, we've heard inexcusable political rhetoric against Muslim Americans that has no place in our country.

No surprise, then, that threats and harassment of Muslim Americans have surged. Here at this mosque, twice last year, threats were made against your children. Around the country, women wearing the hijab—just like Sabah—have been targeted. We've seen children bullied. We've seen mosques vandalized. Sikh Americans and others who are perceived to be Muslims have been targeted as well.

Now, I just had a chance to meet with some extraordinary Muslim Americans from across the country who are doing all sorts of work. Some of them are doctors; some of them are community leaders, religious leaders. All of them were doing extraordinary work not just in the Muslim community, but in the American community. And they're proud of their work in business and education and on behalf of social justice and the environment and education. I should point out they were all much younger than me—[*laughter*]—which is happening more frequently these days. [*Laughter*] And you couldn't help but be inspired hearing about the extraordinary work that they're doing. But you also could not help but be heartbroken to hear their worries and their anxieties.

Some of them are parents, and they talked about how their children were asking, are we going to be forced out of the country? Or, are we going to be rounded up? Why do people treat us like that? Conversations that you shouldn't have to have with children, not in this country, not at this moment.

And that's an anxiety echoed in letters I get from Muslim Americans around the country. I've had people write to me and say, I feel like I'm a second-class citizen. I've had mothers write and say, "My heart cries every night," thinking about how her daughter might be treated at school. A girl from Ohio, 13 years old, told me, "I'm scared." A girl from Texas signed her letter "a confused 14-year-old trying to find her place in the world."

These are children just like mine. And the notion that they would be filled with doubt and questioning their place in this great country of ours at a time when they've got enough to worry about—it's hard being a teenager already—[*laughter*]—that's not who we are.

We're one American family. And when any part of our family starts to feel separate or second class or targeted, it tears at the very fabric of our Nation. [*Applause*] Right?

It's a challenge to our values, and that means we have much work to do. We've got to tackle this head on. We have to be honest and clear about it. And we have to speak out. This is a moment when, as Americans, we have to truly listen to each other and learn from each other. And I believe it has to begin with a common understanding of some basic facts. And I express these facts, although they'd be obvious to many of the people in this place, because, unfortunately, it's not facts that are communicated on a regular basis through our media.

So let's start with this fact: For more than a thousand years, people have been drawn to Islam's message of peace. And the very word itself, Islam, comes from *salaam*—peace. The standard greeting is *as-salaamu alaykum*—peace be upon you. And like so many faiths, Islam is rooted in a commitment to compassion and mercy and justice and charity. Whoever wants to enter paradise, the Prophet Muhammad taught, "let him treat people the way he would love to be treated." And for Christians like myself, I'm assuming that sounds familiar. [*Laughter*]

The world's 1.6 billion Muslims are as diverse as humanity itself. They are Arabs and Africans. They're from Latin America to Southeast Asia: Brazilians, Nigerians, Bangladeshis, Indonesians. They are White and Brown and Black. There's a large African American Muslim community. That diversity is represented here today. A 14-year-old boy in Texas who's Muslim spoke for many when he wrote to me and said, "We just want to live in peace."

So here's another fact: Islam has always been part of America. Starting in colonial times, many of the slaves brought here from Africa were Muslim. And even in their bondage, some kept their faith alive. A few even won their freedom and became known to many Americans. And when enshrining the freedom of religion in our Constitution and our Bill of Rights, our Founders meant what they said when they said it applied to all religions.

Back then, Muslims were often called Mahometans. And Thomas Jefferson explained that the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom he wrote was designed to protect all faiths—and I'm quoting Thomas Jefferson now—"the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and the Mahometan."

Jefferson and John Adams had their own copies of the Koran. Benjamin Franklin wrote that "even if the Mufti of Constantinople were to send a missionary to preach to us, he would find a pulpit at his service." So this is not a new thing.

Generations of Muslim Americans helped to build our Nation. They were part of the flow of immigrants who became farmers and merchants. They built America's first mosque, surprisingly enough, in North Dakota. [*Laughter*] America's oldest surviving mosque is in Iowa. The first Islamic center in New York City was built in the 1890s. Muslim Americans worked on Henry Ford's assembly line, cranking out cars. Muslim American—a Muslim American designed the skyscrapers of Chicago.

In 1957, when dedicating the Islamic Center in Washington, DC, President Eisenhower said, "I should like to assure you, my Islamic friends, that under the American Constitution . . . and in American hearts . . . this place of worship, is just as welcome . . . as any other religion."

And perhaps the most pertinent fact, Muslim Americans enrich our lives today in every way. They're our neighbors, the teachers who inspire our children, the doctors who trust us with our health, future doctors like Sabah. They're scientists who win Nobel Prizes, young entrepreneurs who are creating new technologies that we use all the time. They're the sports heroes we cheer for, like Muhammad Ali and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Hakeem Olajuwon. And by the way, when Team U.S.A. marches into the next Olympics, one of the Americans waving the Red, White, and Blue will be a fencing champion, wearing her hijab, Ibtihaj Muhammad, who is here today. Stand up. Come on, let me—[*applause*]. There you go. I told her to bring home the gold. [*Laughter*] Not to put any pressure on you. [*Laughter*]

Muslim Americans keep us safe. They're our police and our firefighters. They're in homeland security, in our intelligence community. They serve honorably in our Armed Forces, meaning they fight and bleed and die for our freedom. Some rest in Arlington National Cemetery.

So Muslim Americans are some of the most resilient and patriotic Americans you'll ever meet. We're honored to have some of our proud Muslim American servicemembers here today. Please stand if you're here, and we—so we can thank you for your service.

So part of the reason I want to lay out these facts is because, in the discussions that I was having with these incredibly accomplished young people, they were pointing that so often they felt invisible. And part of what we have to do is to lift up the contributions of the Muslim American community not when there's a problem, but all the time.

Our television shows should have some Muslim characters that are unrelated to national security—[*applause*]—right? Because it's not that hard to do. Now, there was a time when there were no Black people on television. [*Laughter*] And you can tell good stories while still representing the reality of our communities.

Now, we do have another fact that we have to acknowledge. Even as the overwhelming majority—and I repeat, the overwhelming majority—of the world's Muslims embrace Islam as a source of peace, it is undeniable that a small fraction of Muslims propagate a perverted interpretation of Islam. This is the truth.

Groups like Al Qaida and ISIL, they're not the first extremists in history to misuse God's name. We've seen it before, across faiths. But right now there is a organized, extremist element that draws selectively from Islamic texts, twists them in an attempt to justify their killing and their terror. They combine it with false claims that America and the West are at war with Islam. And this warped thinking that has found adherents around the world—including, as we saw, tragically, in Boston and Chattanooga and San Bernardino—is real. It's there. And it creates tensions and pressure that disproportionately burden the overwhelming majority of law-abiding Muslim citizens.

The question then is, how do we move forward together? How do we keep our country strong and united? How do we defend ourselves against organizations that are bent on killing innocents? And it can't be the work of

any one faith alone. It can't be just a burden on the Muslim community, although the Muslim community has to play a role. We all have responsibilities. So with the time I have left, I just want to suggest a few principles that I believe can guide us.

First, at a time when others are trying to divide us along lines of religion or sect, we have to reaffirm that most fundamental of truths: We are all God's children. We're all born equal, with inherent dignity.

And so often, we focus on our outward differences, and we forget how much we share. Christians, Jews, Muslims—we're all, under our faiths, descendants of Abraham. So mere tolerance of different religions is not enough. Our faiths summon us to embrace our common humanity. "O mankind," the Koran teaches, we have "made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another." So all of us have the task of expressing our religious faith in a way that seeks to build bridges rather than to divide.

Second, as Americans, we have to stay true to our core values, and that includes freedom of religion for all faiths. I already mentioned our Founders, like Jefferson, knew that religious liberty is essential not only to protect religion, but because religion helps strengthen our Nation, if it is free, if it is not an extension of the state. Part of what's happened in the Middle East and North Africa and other places where we see sectarian violence is religion being a tool for another agenda: for power, for control. Freedom of religion helps prevent that, both ways: protects religious faiths, protects the state from—or those who want to take over the state from using religious animosity as a tool for their own ends.

That doesn't mean that those of us with religious faith should not be involved. We have to be active citizenry. But we have to respect the fact that we have freedom of religion. Remember, many preachers and pastors fought to abolish the evil of slavery. People of faith advocated to improve conditions for workers and ban child labor. Dr. King was joined by people of many faiths, challenging us to live up to our ideals. And that civil activism, that civic participation that's the essence of our democracy, it is enhanced by freedom of religion.

Now, we have to acknowledge that there have been times where we have fallen short of our ideals. By the way, Thomas Jefferson's opponents tried to stir things up by suggesting he was a Muslim, so I was not the first. [*Applause*] No, it's true, it's true. Look it up. [*Laughter*] I'm in good company. [*Laughter*]

But it hasn't just been attacks of that sort that have been used. Mormon communities have been attacked throughout our history. Catholics, including, most prominently, JFK—John F. Kennedy—when he ran for President, was accused of being disloyal. There was a suggestion that he would be taking orders from the Pope as opposed to upholding his constitutional duties. Anti-Semitism in this country has a sad and long history, and Jews were excluded routinely from colleges and professions and from public office.

And so if we're serious about freedom of religion—and I'm speaking now to my fellow Christians who remain the majority in this country—we have to understand an attack on one faith is an attack on all our faiths. And when any religious group is targeted, we all have a responsibility to speak up. And we have to reject a politics that seeks to manipulate prejudice or bias and targets people because of religion.

We've got to make sure that hate crimes are punished and that the civil rights of all Americans are upheld. And just as faith leaders, including Muslims, must speak out when Christians are persecuted around the world or when anti-Semitism is on the rise—because the fact is, is that there are Christians who are targeted now in the Middle East, despite having been there for centuries, and there are Jews who have lived in places like France for centuries who now feel obliged to leave because they feel themselves under assault, sometimes by Muslims—we have to be consistent in condemning hateful rhetoric and violence against everyone. And that includes against Muslims here in the United States of America.

So none of us can be silent. We can't be bystanders to bigotry. And together, we've got to

show that America truly protects all faiths, which brings me to my next point: As we protect our country from terrorism, we should not reinforce the ideas and the rhetoric of the terrorists themselves. I often hear it said that we need moral clarity in this fight. And the suggestion is, somehow that if I would simply say these are all Islamic terrorists, then we would actually have solved the problem by now, apparently. [*Laughter*] Well, I agree, we actually do need moral clarity. Let's have some moral clarity.

Groups like ISIL are desperate for legitimacy. They try to portray themselves as religious leaders and holy warriors who speak for Islam. I refuse to give them legitimacy. We must never give them that legitimacy. They're not defending Islam. They're not defending Muslims. The vast majority of the people they kill are innocent Muslim men, women, and children.

And by the way, the notion that America is at war with Islam ignores the fact that the world's religions are a part of who we are. We're not—we can't be at war with any other religion because the world's religions are a part of the very fabric of the United States, our national character.

So the best way for us to fight terrorism is to deny these organizations legitimacy and to show that here in the United States of America, we do not suppress Islam; we celebrate and lift up the success of Muslim Americans. That's how we show the lie that they're trying to propagate. We shouldn't play into terrorist propaganda. And we can't suggest that Islam itself is at the root of the problem. That betrays our values. It alienates Muslim Americans. It's hurtful to those kids who are trying to go to school and are members of the Boy Scouts and are thinking about joining our military.

That kind of mindset helps our enemies. It helps our enemies recruit. It makes us all less safe. So let's be clear about that.

Now, finally, just as all Americans have a responsibility to reject discrimination—I've said this before—Muslims around the world have a responsibility to reject extremist ideologies that are trying to penetrate within Muslim communities.

Here at this mosque and across our country and around the world, Muslim leaders are roundly and repeatedly and consistently condemning terrorism. And around the globe, Muslims who have dared to speak out have often been targeted and even killed. So those voices are there; we just have to amplify them more.

And it was interesting, in the discussion I had before I came out, some people said, why is there always a burden on us? When a young man in Charleston shoots African Americans in a church, there's not an expectation that every White person in America suddenly is explaining that they're not racist. They can—everybody is assumed to be horrified by that act. And I recognize that sometimes that doesn't feel fair.

But part of the answer is to make sure that the Muslim community in all of its variety, in every—all the good works that are—it's doing, in all the talent that's on display, that it's out there visible on a consistent basis, not just at a certain moment. But what is also true is, is that there is a battle of hearts and minds that takes place—that is taking place right now, and American Muslims are better positioned than anybody to show that it is possible to be faithful to Islam and to be part of a pluralistic society and to be on the cutting edge of science and to believe in democracy.

And so I would urge all of you not to see this as a burden, but as a great opportunity and a great privilege to show who you are. To use a little Christian expression, let your light shine. [*Laughter*] Because when you do, you'll make clear that this is not a clash of civilizations between the West and Islam. This is a struggle between the peace-loving, overwhelming majority of Muslims around the world and a radical, tiny minority. And ultimately, I'm confident that the overwhelming majority will win that battle. Muslims will decide the future of your faith. And I'm confident in the direction that it will go.

But across the Islamic world, influential voices should consistently speak out with an affirmative vision of their faith. And it's happening. These are the voices of Muslim clerics who

teach that Islam prohibits terrorism, for the Koran says, whoever kills an innocent, it is as if he has killed all mankind. These are the voices of Muslim scholars, some of whom joined us today, who know Islam has a tradition of respect for other faiths, and Muslim teachers who point out that the first word revealed in the Koran, *igra*, means "read": to seek knowledge, to question assumptions. [*Applause*] Right?

Muslim political leaders have to push back on the lie that the West oppresses Muslims and against conspiracy theories that says America is the cause of every ill in the Middle East. Now, that doesn't mean that Muslim Americans aren't free to criticize American—U.S. foreign policy. That's part of being an American. I promise you, as the President of the United States, I'm mindful that that is a healthy tradition—[*laughter*]—that is alive and well in America. [*Laughter*] But like leaders everywhere, these leaders have been offering, and need to continue to offer, a positive vision for progress, and that includes political and economic progress.

And we have to acknowledge that much of the violence in places like the Middle East is now turning into fights between sects—Shia, Sunni, and others—where differences are often exploited to serve political agendas, as I said earlier. And this bloodshed is destroying Muslim families and communities, and there has to be global pressure to have the vision and the courage to end this kind of thinking and this approach to organizing political power.

It's not historically unique. It's happened in every part of the world—from Northern Ireland to Africa, to Asia, to right here in the United States—in the past. But it is something that we have to fight against. And we know it's possible. Across the history of Islam, different sects traditionally have lived and thrived together peacefully. And in many parts of the world they do today, including here in the United States.

Like people of all religions, Muslims living their faith in a modern, pluralistic world are called upon to uphold human rights, to make sure that everyone has opportunity. That includes the aspirations of women and youth and all people. If we expect our own dignity to be respected, so must we respect the dignity of others.

So let me conclude by saying that as Muslim communities stand up for the future that you believe in, that you exhibit in your daily lives, as you teach your children, America will be your partner. We will—I will—do everything I can to lift up the multiplicity of Muslim voices that promote pluralism and peace. We will continue to reach out to young Muslims around the world, empowering them with science and technology and entrepreneurship so they can pursue their God-given potential and help build up their communities and provide opportunity. It's why we will continue to partner with Muslim American communities, not just to help you protect against extremist threats, but to expand health care and education and opportunity. Because that's the best way to build strong, resilient communities.

Our values must guide us in this work. Engagement with Muslim American communities must never be a cover for surveillance. We can't give in to profiling entire groups of people. There's no one single profile of terrorists. We can't securitize our entire relationship with Muslim Americans. We can't deal with you solely through the prism of law enforcement. We've got to build trust and mutual respect. That's how we'll keep our communities strong and our communities united.

Now, I—as I was in discussion with the young people before I came in here, I said this will be a process. Law enforcement has a tough job. Some of these groups are specifically trying to target Muslim youth. We're going to have to be partners in this process. There will be times where the relationship is clumsy or mishandled. But I want you to know that from the President to the FBI Director, to everybody in law enforcement, my directive and their understanding is, is that this is something we have to do together. And if we don't do it well, then we're actually not making ourselves safer, we're making ourselves less safe.

And I—here, I want to speak directly to the young people who may be listening. In our

lives, we all have many identities. We are sons and daughters and brothers and sisters. We're classmates; we're Cub Scout troop members. We're followers of our faith. We're citizens of our country. And today, there are voices in this world, particularly over the Internet, who are constantly claiming that you have to choose between your identities: as a Muslim, for example, or an American. Do not believe them. If you're ever wondering whether you fit in here, let me say it as clearly as I can, as President of the United States: You fit in here—right here. You're right where you belong. You're part of America too. You're not Muslim or American. You're Muslim and American.

And don't grow cynical. Don't respond to ignorance by embracing a world view that suggests you must choose between your faith and your patriotism. Don't believe that you have to choose between your best impulses and somehow embrace a world view that pits us against each other or, even worse, glorifies violence. Understand your power to bring about change. Stay engaged in your community. Help move our country forward, your country forward.

We are blessed to live in a nation where, even if we sometimes stumble, even if we sometimes fall short, we never stop striving for our ideals. We keep moving closer to that more perfect Union. We're a country where, if you work hard and if you play by the rules, you can ultimately make it, no matter who you are or how you pray. It may not always start off even in the race, but here, more than any place else, there's the opportunity to run that race.

And as we go forward, I want every Muslim American to remember you are not alone. Your fellow Americans stand with you, just as Sabah described her friends after she decided that she was going to start wearing a hijab. That's not unusual. Because just as so often we only hear about Muslims after a terrorist attack, so often we only hear about Americans' response to Muslims after a hate crime has happened. And we don't always hear about the extraordinary respect and love and community that so many Americans feel.

I'm thinking about the 7-year-old boy in Texas who emptied his piggy bank to help a mosque that had been vandalized. Or all the faith communities that rallied around Muslim Americans after the tragedy in Chapel Hill. The churches and the synagogues standing shoulder to shoulder with their local mosques, including the woman carrying a sign saying "We love our Muslim neighbors." Think of our men and women in uniform who, when they heard that a little girl was afraid because she's a Muslim, sent her a message: "I Will Protect You."

I want every American to remember how Muslim communities are standing up for others as well. Because right now, as we speak, there are Muslims in Kenya who saved Christians from terrorists and Muslims who just met in Morocco to protect religious minorities, including Christians and Jews. The good people of this mosque helped this city move forward after the turmoil of last year. Muslim Americans across the country helped African American churches rebuild after arson.

Remember the Muslim Americans in Boston who reached out to victims of the Marathon bombing, the Muslim Americans across the country who raised money for the families of San Bernardino, the Muslim Americans in Chattanooga who honored our fallen servicemembers, one of them saying, "In the name of God, the God of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, God bless our fallen heroes."

We are one American family. We will rise and fall together. It won't always be easy. There will be times where our worst impulses are given voice. But I believe that ultimately, our best voices will win out. And that gives me confidence and faith in the future.

After more than 200 years, our blended heritage, the patchwork quilt which is America, that is not a weakness, that is one of our greatest strengths. It's what makes us a beacon to the world. It's what led that mother who wrote to me—the one who worries about her young daughter—it led her to end her letter with hope, despite her fears. She said, "I still believe in one Nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

May God's peace be upon you. May God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:04 p.m. in the ISB/Masjid Al-Rahmah Prayer Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Sabah Muktar, student, University of Maryland, Baltimore County; former heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali; Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, former center, National Basketball Association's Los Angeles Lakers; Hakeem Abdul Olajuwon, former center, NBA's Houston Rockets; Dylann S. Roof, suspected gunman in the June 17, 2015, shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC; Jack Swanson, donor to the Islamic Center in Pflugerville, TX, which was vandalized on November 16, 2015; Paula Criswell, member of the Bay Area Unitarian Universalist Church in Houston, TX, who participated in a rally in Webster, TX, on December 4, 2015; Plano, TX, resident Sofia Yassani, who was the subject of the "I Will Protect You" social media campaign; and Mohsin Ali, a representative from the Islamic Society of Greater Chattanooga who spoke at the memorial service for the victims of the July 16, 2015, shooting at a U.S. Navy Reserve center in Chattanooga, TN. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Statement on the Signing of the Trans-Pacific Partnership
February 3, 2016

For more than 5 years, a group of 12 countries have negotiated a forward-looking trade deal that sets new, high standards for trade and investment in one of the world's fastest growing and most important regions. Today these countries signed the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a new type of trade deal that puts American workers first.

Right now the rules of global trade too often undermine our values and put our workers and businesses at a disadvantage. TPP will change that. It eliminates more than 18,000 taxes that various countries put on "Made in America" products. It promotes a free and open Internet and prevents unfair laws that restrict the free flow of data and information. It includes the strongest labor standards and environmental commitments in history, and unlike in past agreements, these standards are fully enforceable. TPP allows America—and not countries like China—to write the rules of the road in the 21st century, which is especially important in a region as dynamic as the Asia-Pacific.

Put simply, TPP will bolster our leadership abroad and support good jobs here at home. That's why I released the full text of the agreement 3 months ago for all to see, and it's why I'll continue working with Democrats and Republicans in Congress to enact it into law as soon as possible so our economy can immediately start benefiting from the tens of billions of dollars in new export opportunities. We should get TPP done this year and give more American workers the shot at success they deserve and help more American businesses compete and win around the world.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in or in Relation to Côte d'Ivoire
February 3, 2016

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency, unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary

date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13396 of February 7, 2006, with respect to the situation in or in relation to Côte d'Ivoire is to continue in effect beyond February 7, 2016.

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire and its people continue to make significant progress in promotion of democratic, social, and economic development. We congratulate Côte d'Ivoire on holding a peaceful and credible presidential election, which represents an important milestone on the country's road to full recovery. The United States also supports the advancement of national reconciliation and impartial justice in Côte d'Ivoire. The United States is committed to helping Côte d'Ivoire strengthen its democracy and stay on the path of peaceful democratic transition, and we look forward to working with the Government and people of Côte d'Ivoire to ensure continued progress and lasting peace for all Ivoirians.

While the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and its people continue to make progress towards consolidating democratic gains and peace and prosperity, the situation in or in relation to Côte d'Ivoire continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency and related measures blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 3, 2016.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast
February 4, 2016

The President. Thank you. You're very kind. Thank you very much. Well, good morning.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. Giving all praise and honor to God for bringing us together here this morning. I want to thank everyone who helped organize this breakfast, especially our cochairs, Robert and Juan, who embody the tradition of friendship, fellowship, and prayer. I will begin with a confession: I have always felt a tinge of guilt motorcading up here at the heart of DC's rush hour. [*Laughter*] I suspect that not all the commuters were blessing me as they waited to get to work. [*Laughter*] But it's for a good cause. A National Prayer Brunch doesn't have the same ring to it. [*Laughter*]

And Michelle and I are extremely honored, as always, to be with so many friends, with Members of Congress, with faith leaders from across the country and around the world, to be with the Speaker, Leader. I want thank Mark and Roma for their friendship and their extraordinary story and sharing those inspiring words; Andrea, for sharing his remarkable gifts.

And on this occasion, I always enjoy reflecting on a piece of scripture that's been meaningful to me or otherwise sustained me throughout the year. And lately, I've been thinking and praying on a verse from Second Timothy: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

We live in extraordinary times, times of extraordinary change. We're surrounded by tectonic shifts in technology and in our economy, by destructive conflict, disruptions to our environment. And it all reshapes the way we work and the way we live. It's all amplified by a media that is unceasing and that feeds 24/7 our ever-shrinking attention spans.

And as a student of history, I often remind people that the challenges that we face are not unique; that in fact, the threats of previous

eras—whether civil war or world war or cold war, depressions or famines—those challenges put our own in perspective. Moreover, I believe that our unique strengths as a nation make us better equipped than others to harness this change to work for us, rather than against us.

And yet the sheer rapidity of change, and the uncertainty that it brings, is real: the hardship of a family trying to make ends meet, refugees fleeing from a war-torn home—those things are real. Terrorism, eroding shorelines—those things are real. Even the very progress that humanity has made, the affluence, the stability that so many of us enjoy, far greater prosperity than any previous generation of humanity has experienced, shines a brighter light on those who still struggle, reveal the gap in prospects that exist for the children of the world.

And that gap between want and plenty, it gives us vertigo. It can make us afraid, not only of the possibility that progress will stall, but that maybe we have more to lose. And fear does funny things. Fear can lead us to lash out against those who are different or lead us to try to get some sinister "other" under control. Alternatively, fear can lead us to succumb to despair or paralysis or cynicism. Fear can feed our most selfish impulses and erode the bonds of community.

It is a primal emotion, fear, one that we all experience. And it can be contagious, spreading through societies and through nations. And if we let it consume us, the consequences of that fear can be worse than any outward threat.

For me, and I know for so many of you, faith is the great cure for fear. Jesus is a good cure for fear. God gives believers the power, the love, the sound mind required to conquer any fear. And what more important moment for that faith than right now? What better time than these changing, tumultuous times to have Jesus standing beside us, steadying our minds, cleansing our hearts, pointing us towards what matters.

His love gives us the power to resist fear's temptations. He gives us the courage to reach out to others across that divide, rather than push people away. He gives us the courage to go against the conventional wisdom and stand up for what's right, even when it's not popular; to stand up not just to our enemies, but sometimes, to stand up to our friends. He gives us the fortitude to sacrifice ourselves for a larger cause or to make tough decisions knowing that we can only do our best. Less of me, more of God. And then, to have the courage to admit our failings and our sins while pledging to learn from our mistakes and to try to do better.

Certainly, during the course of this enormous privilege to have served as the President of the United States, that's what faith has done for me. It helps me deal with the common, everyday fears that we all share. The main one I'm feeling right now is that our children grow up too fast. [*Laughter*] They're leaving. [*Laughter*] That's a tough deal. [*Laughter*] And so, as a parent, you're worrying about will some harm befall them, how are they going to manage without you, did you miss some central moment in their lives? Will they call? [*Laughter*] Or text? [*Laughter*] Each day, we're fearful that God's purpose becomes elusive, cloudy. We try to figure out how we fit into his broader plan. They're universal fears that we have, and my faith helps me to manage those.

And then my faith helps me to deal with some of the unique elements of my job. As one of the great departed heroes of our age, Nelson Mandela, once said: "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. . . . The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."

And certainly, there are times where I've had to repeat that to myself while holding this office. When you hear from a parade of experts, just days after you're elected, that another Great Depression is a very real possibility, that will get your attention. [*Laughter*] When you tell a room full of young cadets that you've made a decision to send them into harm's way, knowing that some of them might not return safely, that's sobering. When you hold in your arms the mothers and fathers of innocent children gunned down in their classroom, that reminds you there's evil in the world. And so you come to understand what President Lincoln

meant when he said that he'd been driven to his knees by the overwhelming conviction that he had no place else to go.

And so like every President, like every leader, like every person, I've known fear. But my faith tells me that I need not fear death, that the acceptance of Christ promises everlasting life and the washing away of sins. If Scripture instructs me to "put on the full armor of God" so that when trouble comes, I'm able to stand, then surely, I can face down these temporal setbacks; surely, I can battle back doubts; surely, I can rouse myself to action.

And should that faith waver, should I lose my way, I have drawn strength not only from a remarkable wife, not only from incredible colleagues and friends, but I have drawn strength from witnessing all across this country and all around this world good people, of all faiths, who do the Lord's work each and every day, who wield that power and love and sound mind to feed the hungry and heal the sick, to teach our children and welcome the stranger.

Think about the extraordinary work of the congregations and faith communities represented here today. Whether fighting global poverty or working to end the scourge of human trafficking, you are the leaders of what Pope Francis calls "this march of living hope."

When the Earth cleaves in Haiti, Christians, Sikhs, and other faith groups sent volunteers to distribute aid, tend to the wounded, rebuild homes for the homeless.

When Ebola ravaged West Africa, Jewish, Christian, Muslim groups responded to the outbreak to save lives. And as the news fanned the flames of fear, churches and mosques responded with a powerful rebuke, welcoming survivors into their pews.

When nine worshippers were murdered in a Charleston church basement, it was people of all faiths who came together to wrap a shattered community in love and understanding.

When Syrian refugees seek the sanctuary of our shores, it's the faithful from synagogues, mosques, temples, and churches who welcome them, the first to offer blankets and food and open their homes. Even now people of different faiths and beliefs are coming together to help people suffering in Flint.

And then, there's the most—less spectacular, more quiet efforts of congregations all across this country just helping people, seeing God in others. And we're driven to do this because we're driven by the value that so many of our faiths teach us: I am my brother's keeper; I am my sister's keeper. As Christians, we do this compelled by the Gospel of Jesus, the command to love God and love one another.

And so, yes, like every person, there are times where I'm fearful. But my faith and, more importantly, the faith that I've seen in so many of you, the God I see in you, that makes me inevitably hopeful about our future. I have seen so many who know that God has not given us a spirit of fear. He has given us power and love and a sound mind.

We see that spirit in people like Pastor Saeed Abedini, imprisoned for no crime other than holding God in his heart. And last year, we prayed that he might be freed. And this year, we give thanks that he is home safe.

We pray for God's protection for all around the world who are not free to practice their faith, including Christians who are persecuted or who have been driven from their ancient homelands by unspeakable violence. And just as we call on other countries to respect the rights of religious minorities, we too respect the right of every single American to practice their faith freely. For this is what each of us is called on to do: to seek our common humanity in each other; to make sure our politics and our public discourse reflect that same spirit of love and sound mind; to assume the best in each other and not just the worst and not just at the National Prayer Breakfast; to begin each of our works from the shared belief that all of us want what's good and right for our country and our future.

We can draw such strength from the quiet moments of heroism around us every single day. And so let me close with two such stories that I've come to know just over the past week.

A week ago, I spoke at a ceremony held at the Israeli Embassy for the first time, honoring the courage of people who saved Jews during

the Holocaust. And one of the recipients was the grandson—or the son of an American soldier who had been captured by the Nazis. So a group of American soldiers are captured, and their captors ordered Jewish POWs to identify themselves. And one sergeant, a Christian named Roddie Edmonds, from Tennessee, ordered all American troops to report alongside them. They lined up in formation, approximately 200 of them, and the Nazi colonel said, "I asked only for the Jewish POWs," and said, "These can't all be Jewish." And Master Sergeant Edmonds stood there and said, "We are all Jews." And the colonel took out his pistol and held it to the Master Sergeant's head and said, "Tell me who the Jews are." And he repeated, "We are all Jews." And faced with the choice of shooting all those soldiers, the Nazis relented. And so, through his moral clarity, through an act of faith, Sergeant Edmonds saved the lives of his Jewish brothers-in-arms.

A second story. Just yesterday some of you may be aware, I visited a mosque in Baltimore to let our Muslim American brothers and sisters know that they too are Americans and welcome here. And there, I met a Muslim American named Rami Nashashibi, who runs a not-profit working for social change in Chicago. And he forms coalitions with churches and Latino groups and African Americans in this poor neighborhood in Chicago. And he told me how the day after the tragedy in San Bernardino happened, he took his three young children to a playground in the Marquette Park neighborhood, and while they were out, the time came for one of the five daily prayers that are essential to the Muslim tradition. And on any other day, he told me, he would have immediately put his rug out on the grass right there and prayed.

But that day, he paused. He feared any unwelcome attention he might attract to himself and his children. And his 7-year-old daughter asked him: "What are you doing, Dad? Isn't it time to pray?" And he thought of all the times he had told her the story of the day that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rabbi Robert Marx and 700 other people marched to that very same park, enduring hatred and bigotry, dodging rocks and bottles and hateful words in order to challenge Chicago housing segregation and to ask America to live up to our highest ideals.

And so, at that moment, drawing from the courage of men of different religions, of a different time, Rami refused to teach his children to be afraid. Instead, he taught them to be a part of that legacy of faith and good conscience. "I want them to understand that sometimes faith will be tested," he told me, "and that we will be asked to show immense courage, like others have before us, to make our city, our country, and a world a better reflection of all our ideals." And he put down his rug, and he prayed.

Now, those two stories, they give me courage, and they give me hope. And they instruct me in my own Christian faith. I can't imagine a moment in which that young American sergeant expressed his Christianity more profoundly than when, confronted by his own death, he said "We are all Jews." I can't imagine a clearer expression of Jesus' teachings. I can't imagine a better expression of the peaceful spirit of Islam than when a Muslim father, filled with fear, drew from the example of a Baptist preacher—[*laughter*]—and a Jewish rabbi to teach his children what God demands.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. I pray that by His grace, we all find the courage to set such examples in our own lives, not just during this wonderful gathering and fellowship, not just in the public piety that we profess, but in those smaller moments when it's difficult, when we're challenged, when we're angry, when we're confronted with someone who doesn't agree with us, when no one is watching. I pray, as Roma so beautifully said, that our differences ultimately are bridged, that the God that is in each of us comes together, and the—we don't divide.

I pray that our leaders will always act with humility and generosity. I pray that my failings are forgiven. I pray that we will uphold our obligation to be good stewards of God's creation, this beautiful planet. I pray that we will see every single child as our own, each worthy of our

love and of our compassion. And I pray we answer Scripture's call to lift up the vulnerable and to stand up for justice and ensure that every human being lives in dignity.

That's my prayer for this breakfast, and for this country, in the years to come.

May God bless you, and may He continue to bless this country that we love.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:27 a.m. at the Washington Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Reps. Robert B. Aderholt and Juan Vargas, in their capacity as cochairs, and Mark Burnett, president, MGM Television & Digital Group, and his wife, actor and producer Roma Downey, in their capacity as keynote speakers, of the National Prayer Breakfast; House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi; musician Andrea Bocelli; Boise, ID, resident Saeed Abedini, who was imprisoned in Iran from 2012 until his release in January 2016; Chris Edmonds, son of Righteous Among the Nations honoree Roddie Edmonds; Rami Nashashibi, executive director, Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN); and Robert J. Marx, founder, Jewish Council on Urban Affairs.

Remarks Honoring the 2015 National Basketball Association Champion Golden State Warriors

February 4, 2016

The President. Welcome to the White House, everybody. Give it up for the NBA Champion Golden State Warriors! Everybody, please have a seat. Now, let me begin by saying I was hoping that Riley Curry would be here today—[*laughter*]—to share the podium with me, but I guess I'm going to have to get media training some other day. [*Laughter*]

The East Room is not as loud as the "Roaracle," but Dub Nation is well represented. We've got some members of my Cabinet and Congress in the house who are big fans, and I don't just mean Harrison Barnes, who apparently they call the Senator. [*Laughter*] He's from Iowa, so maybe he's got some politics in his blood. But we've got one of the biggest Golden State Warrior fans around, our leader in the House of Representatives, Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi. We've got Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy is here, so this is bipartisan. We have Mayor Schaaf is here. So we're glad you're here to celebrate the best in the Bay. [*Laughter*] What's going on back here? [*Laughter*]

I also want to recognize Warriors Executive Board member and NBA legend, one of the greatest of all time, "The Logo," Jerry West. [*Applause*] He's worth a standing ovation. As well as owner Joe Lacob and General Manager Bob Myers. Give them a big round of applause.

Now, it is rare to be in the presence of guys from the greatest team in NBA history. So we're pretty lucky today, because we've got one of those players in the house: Steve Kerr from the 1995–96 Chicago Bulls! [*Laughter*] It's good to see you back. [*Laughter*]

Head Coach Steve Kerr. Thank you.

The President. Now, for those of you who don't know, the Warriors started this season without Coach Kerr, who was recovering from back surgery. So Luke Walton stepped up and led the team to a ridiculous 39-and-4 record. Unfortunately, the NBA won't let Luke count those wins as his own. [*Laughter*] Which, man, that doesn't seem fair. [*Laughter*] You defied the cynics, you accomplished big things, you racked up a great record, and you don't get enough credit. [*Laughter*] Well, I can't imagine how that feels. [*Laughter*]

Now, let's face it, the Warriors are in the midst of a pretty special 2-year run. Folks are saying that they are "revolutionizing" basketball. They are so good that they seem to be just breaking the game itself. And I don't play anymore, but I still know a little bit about basketball, and this really is one of the best that we've ever seen. Great shooting, great passing, a small-ball "nuclear lineup"—it's almost not fair. And they play not just well, but they play well together. They play as a team the way bas-

ketball is supposed to be played. And it's beautiful to watch when they're working on all cylinders.

Now, let's face it, "beautiful" was not how folks described the Warriors for many years. [*Laughter*] I may be one of the few who are old enough to remember the last time they were good, back in the middle seventies, I was—the last time they won a championship—I was 10 years old. [*Laughter*] So the franchise, it had some good teams and some great players, but it had been struggling. One college player forgot that there was even a team in Oakland. That was Klay Thompson, by the way. [*Laughter*]

But a few years ago, Joe Lacob took over, pointed out—pointed to that 1975 Championship banner and said, "That's a very lonely flag. We need another one." And last year, they got it: 67 wins, 16 straight at one point. That used to seem like a lot until this year—[*laughter*]—where they started off 24 and 0. Ended last season with their first title in 40 years.

And obviously, a big part of that was league MVP, Steph Curry. Steph is a pretty good shooter. [*Laughter*] For those of you who watched the game against the Wizards last night, he was—to use slang—he was "clowning." [*Laughter*] He was all jumping up and down. [*Laughter*] Just settle down, all right? He was all jumping up and down. [*Laughter*] Just settle down. By the way, for the record, I heard during this summer, after our golf game, that Steph was using the excuse of Secret Service being intimidating for why he lost the match. That is not the case. [*Laughter*] But he will have another opportunity. Obviously, watching Steph play is incredible. And for anybody who enjoys basketball, it is just a lot of fun.

But it's not just Steph. There's the other "Splash Brother," Klay, who dropped 37 points in a quarter, and whose jump shot is actually a little prettier. [*Laughter*] I mean, I'm just saying. There were Barnes dunks, Bogut blocks, Draymond Green showing us "heart over height" every single night. Draymond is also known to add a few more words that I cannot repeat. [*Laughter*] Then, you've got a couple of unselfish All-Stars in their own right that were coming off the bench: Andre Iguodala and David Lee. And a bench that was so good that an opposing coach complained, "they've got two starting lineups."

In the Finals, Golden State faced Cleveland and a guy named LeBron. Down two games to one, Coach Kerr had the guts to shake up the lineup, and it worked. Andre came off the bench, played great D, took home the Finals MVP. And it was a perfect example of the kind of team this is: everybody doing their part, everybody ready to step up at any moment. Unselfish play. Folks looking out for each other.

And it's the same kind of selflessness that the Warriors show in their community as well. They've led the way for the NBA's commitment to our "My Brother's Keeper" initiative, promoting mentoring in the Bay Area and nationwide. I know they met with some students in the White House mentor program earlier today. This team is also supporting the city's Oakland Promise effort to help more kids make it through college. You've had players take a stand against gun violence, work with—[*applause*]. They've worked with Michelle's "Let's Move!" initiative. They've dressed up as Santa to deliver Christmas presents to those in need. And the first time I met Steph was because he had partnered with the U.N. Foundation to donate three antimalarial mosquito nets for every 3-pointer he makes. So last night, that's 33 nets. [*Laughter*] So keep shooting, Steph. Not that he needs any encouragement obviously. [*Laughter*]

I—the point is, this is a great basketball team, but it's a great organization, it's a great culture. And these are outstanding young men. And some of them I've met before. Steph I've gotten to know a little better. They're just—they're the kind of people you want representing a city, representing the NBA, and the kinds of people that you want our kids to be rooting for.

So they have a lot to be proud of. Good luck for the rest of this season. Maybe you'll break that Bulls record. But as Coach Kerr pointed out, he wins either way. Either way, he's got the record. [*Laughter*]

So thanks, everybody. Congratulations.

You want to say something?

Coach Kerr. Thank you. I'm actually—I'm a little thirsty. Is that my water or yours? [*Laughter*]

The President. It is. Go for it.

Coach Kerr. I thought maybe it was yours. [*Laughter*] I'm guessing it's yours.

I want to say thank you. I also want to say congratulations for becoming the first President in our Nation's great history to use the term "clowning." So—[*laughter*].

The President. I'm proud of that.

Coach Kerr. Although maybe Teddy Roosevelt used it somewhere in there, I don't know. [*Laughter*] But we want to thank you. Our organization is so honored to be here, to meet you, to tour the White House, and to celebrate our championship with you here.

Our general manager, Bob Myers, who you met earlier, also mentioned to me that you're going to be a free agent at the end of this year. [*Laughter*] So we don't know if you have anything lined up yet, but——

The President. I'm ready to go.

[*At this point, Coach Kerr presented the President with a team jersey.*]

Coach Kerr. You can consider this a symbol of an offer that's coming. We want you—as soon as your duties are done here in the White House, we'd like you to be the leader of Dub Nation.

The President. Forty-four!

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:02 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Harrison B.J. Barnes, forward, Luke T. Walton, assistant coach, Andrew M. Bogut and Draymond J. Green, centers, Klay A. Thompson, W. Stephen Curry II, and Andre T. Iguodala, guards, and David Lee, former forward, Golden State Warriors; Riley Curry, daughter of Mr. Curry; Mayor Elizabeth B. "Libby" Schaaf of Oakland, CA; Monty Williams, assistant coach, Oklahoma City Thunder, in his former capacity as head coach of the New Orleans Pelicans; and LeBron R. James, forward, Cleveland Cavaliers.

Remarks at a Plan Colombia Reception With President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon of Colombia
February 4, 2016

President Obama. Well, good evening. *Bienvenidos a la Casa Blanca*. [*Laughter*] Thank you all for being here as we reaffirm a great partnership between the United States and Colombia and as we celebrate a decade and a half of progress under Plan Colombia. It's a great honor to welcome my good friend, President Santos; the First Lady, Mrs. Rodriguez de Santos; their outstanding sons, who are—one is at UVA, and he reminded me that the basketball team there is better than the Kansas Jayhawks, his father's alma mater. [*Laughter*]

I want to recognize former President Pastrana. We are honored to have you here, as well. And I want to thank all the leaders, all the Members of Congress who have been critical to this partnership over many years. It's been a bipartisan effort of support—Democrats and Republicans, business leaders, faith communities, civil society, our military that has done outstanding work. And I especially want to recognize someone who's played a vital role in the peace process—that's our Special Envoy, Bernie Aronson. So thank you, Bernie, for the good work that you're doing.

In the United States, we are big fans of Colombia. [*Laughter*] We love its culture, we love its contributions. We love Shakira. [*Laughter*] Carlos Vives. Sofia Vergara. I really—you know—[*laughter*]. We're joined by many friends from Colombia. We have a lot of proud Colombian Americans. And that includes some of the great talents who are here tonight. We've got actors like John Leguizamo. Where's John? Right there. And Juan Pablo Montoya. There he is. Former shortstop for my beloved Chicago White Sox, Orlando Cabrera. There you go.

So the bonds between our countries are not just at the level of government. They're people. They're cultures and friendships and family. And reflective of that, President Santos and I just had another very productive meeting. This is one of the strongest partnerships in the hemisphere, and increasingly, we're global partners. It's a partnership grounded in mutual interests and mutual respect. And Juan Manuel and I discussed ways that we can continue to strengthen our ties with more trade, more investment in clean energy, ever deeper cooperation in the region.

Of course, much of our work focused on how to seize this incredible moment of promise in Colombia. We all remember a time, not long ago, when Colombia was torn apart by terrible violence, plagued by insurgency and civil war. Many of you who are here lived through those times. Some of you here lost loved ones or friends, colleagues.

And that's why the United States and Colombia forged what became Plan Colombia, starting with President Pastrana and transcending administrations in both of our countries. We were proud to support Colombia and its people as you strengthened your security forces, as you reformed land laws, and bolstered democratic institutions. So Plan Colombia has been a tribute to the people of Colombia and their efforts to overcome so many challenges. And after 15 years of sacrifice and determination, a tipping point has been reached. The tide has turned.

As President Santos would be first to tell you, obviously, serious challenges remain. But from Cartagena to the *campo*, there's no denying Colombia's remarkable transformation. Today's Colombia is a country of artists and entrepreneurs and dynamic cities. In the barrios of Medellin, new businesses, along with giant outdoor escalators up the hillsides, are literally lifting people out of poverty. Children who once hid in fear now have the chance to pursue their dreams. In short, a country that was on the brink of collapse is now on the brink of peace. I had the privilege of seeing some of this extraordinary change myself when I visited Cartagena. I still believe what I said then: In Colombia today, there is hope.

Now, fully realizing that hope requires a just and lasting peace. So, President Santos, I've said to you privately—I want to reiterate publicly how much I admire the great courage and resolve that you've shown in pursuing negotiations to end the war. You've committed to an agreement that upholds Colombia's national and international legal obligations, and you've put victims at the center of this process. I want to thank all of the parties for their efforts, including the Government of Cuba for hosting the talks. We all know that it's easier to start wars than end them. But after a half a century of wrenching conflict, the time has come for peace. It's time to make real the words of the young Colombian who said, "The only thing I want to see die over here in the west side of town is the Sun at the end of the day." [*Laughter*]

Of course, peace will just be the first step. Any agreement will have to be implemented. And just as the United States has been Colombia's partner in a time of war, I indicated to President Santos we will be your partner in waging peace. So today I'm proud to announce a new framework for the next chapter of our partnership. And we're going to call it Peace Colombia—*Paz Colombia*.

So, as Colombia transitions to peace, the United States will work with you, hand in hand. I'm proposing that more than $450 million be devoted to helping to reinforce security gains, reintegrate former combatants into society, and extend opportunity and the rule of law into areas denied them for decades. We will continue to stand for human rights and justice for victims, and we will keep working to protect our people, as well as the Colombian people, from the ravages of illegal drugs and the violence of drug traffickers.

As part of our global demining efforts, the United States intends to support Colombia as it works to remove every landmine in the country within 5 years. That's our goal. And Secretary Kerry will lead this effort. I want to thank our partner, Norway, and we invite others to join in this really important work so that every

Colombian child can walk into a brighter future free of fear.

I can't emphasize enough how this is a concrete manifestation that we can achieve in a relatively short timeframe that not only ensures that innocents are not injured or killed, but it also means that land that may have been very difficult to develop or to farm now is available. And we're very proud to be part of that effort.

And I indicated to President Santos that as the negotiations conclude—assuming success, assuming an embrace by the Colombian people—we will continue to solicit ideas from your Government and the Colombian people about how else we can help and mobilize the international community to support your efforts.

But the point is, is that because of the vision and leadership of not only the Colombian people and Colombian Government, but also Democrats and Republicans and Members of Congress and so many who invested so much in this effort many years ago, we want to make sure that we are showing that same commitment going forward. We don't consider this an end to our friendship and our partnership, but rather a new beginning.

And just as we did 15 years ago, we intend to bet on Colombia's success. We're united by a common vision: a future that is more just and more equitable, more prosperous for all of our people. One of my most memorable experiences in Colombia was when I accompanied President Santos as he granted land title to two Afro-Colombian communities. And it was a wonderful day, not just because we were hanging out with Shakira. [*Laughter*] There, in the Plaza de San Pedro, we watched as the descendants of slaves laid claim to their piece of a new Colombia. And it was a reminder of what peace really means in people's daily lives, what's possible when people are empowered, no matter what they look like or where they come from.

And that's a vision that President Santos believes in. That's a vision that we share: that this is not just an abstract exercise at the highest levels of government. This is something that has to affect ordinary people in increasing their security and their opportunity. That's what we mean when we talk about building a truly peaceful, prosperous Colombia. That's what we hope to help you realize: a place, as the great novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez once imagined, a place "where no one will be able to decide for others how they die, where love will prove true and happiness be possible."

In this great work, Colombia will have no greater friend than the United States of America. *Muchas gracias.*

[*At this point, President Santos made brief remarks in English as follows.*]

President Santos. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And good evening to all of you. You said at the beginning that Americans love and admire Colombians. I must say the same thing: Colombians love and admire Americans. And they love you very much. You are the most popular person in the Colombian polls. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. That's good to know. That's not true here in the United States.

[*President Santos continued in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

President Santos. Today is a day to give thanks. Today I come back to Washington to thank you: to thank the people and the Government of the United States for the support that they have given to Colombia during the last 15 years and to project our cooperation in—throughout the next few years.

There are many people that I would like to recognize for their support who have participated in the creation and the administration of Plan Colombia over the past 30 years. Many of them are present here today. The ex-Presidents of the United States, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, as well as my predecessors, Andres Pastrana and Alvaro Uribe; the Secretaries, Ministers, Ambassadors, and high officials of both governments; the Senators, the Congressmen of the United States and of Colombia; the leaders and members of the armed forces and the police of both countries; of busi-

nessmen and so many people who have contributed to this plan: Thank you all very much.

And thank you to you, President Obama, because you've not only maintained your support for Plan Colombia, but you have inspired us to find a better and deeper partnership between our two countries.

Today we can say without a doubt that the goals that we had in 2000—such as fighting the drug war, strengthening institutions, and imposing the rule of law, and to take social programs to great parts of remote Colombian territory—have been—those objectives have been met.

Today's Colombia is much, much different from the Colombia of 15 years ago. Our country at that time was going through the worst recession—economic recession of the last 70 or 80 years. We were very far from controlling our own territory, and we were very close to being declared a failed state. Practically a third of our national territory was controlled by paramilitaries. Another third was being controlled by the guerrillas, and both were financed by drug trafficking. We had a very dark and uncertain future.

Today, the outlook is completely opposite. Today, we see the future with hope. We've gone from the worst economic recession in our recent history to being leaders in economic growth in America—in Latin America. And not just in growth: We are also leaders in job creation, in reducing poverty, in strengthening our middle class. We have gone from these shameful national—international championship of being the first in murders and kidnappings to have the lowest indexes of these crimes that we've ever had in the last 4 years. And despite the increase over the last 2 years in coca cultivation in Colombia, almost 60 percent of that cultivation has gone down. The number of rural families that are involved in this business of cultivating coca has been reduced by two-thirds.

And all of that, while we continue very vigorously and decidedly to fight against drug trafficking, so much so that last year, we were able to overcome all kinds of records in the volume of cocaine seized: more than 250 tons of it.

Those thousands of families who entered into the legal economy, thanks to your help, thanks to Plan Colombia, has—have shown us the way of what our cooperation can be over the next 15 years. In fact, we have already implemented a comprehensive policy of crop substitution that contemplates every link in the chain of drug trafficking. And it will be much more effective because it will attack the roots and not just the symptoms of this problem.

All of these advances are due in great part to the fact that 15 years ago, when we were in such serious straits, the Colombians received a friendly hand. And that friendly hand came from here, from Washington, from both sides of the aisle, Democrats and Republicans. And thus it has remained.

A lot of people say that Plan Colombia is the bipartisan incentive that has been most successful over the last few years. But people perceive it as an exclusively military or security initiative. But it was much more than that. It's true that Plan Colombia helped us to have the most powerful Armed Forces, the most effective Armed Forces that Colombia has ever had in its history, and they, today, are out there training armed forces of other countries in the region. But the reason for its success was that it was a comprehensive strategy: a strategy that also bet on social programs, on justice, on rural development, and on strengthening our democratic institutions.

In the name of the residents of that forgotten Colombia who are finally seeing the presence of a state, thank you. In the name of those rural dwellers who are now cultivating legal crops and have bettered their conditions of life, thank you. In the names of millions of Colombians who are starting to live without fear, thank you. But above all, in the name of new generations throughout Colombian territory, in the names of those children who can see a better future now, thank you. Thank you very much.

[*President Santos spoke in English as follows.*]

If in Colombia, we are on the brink of a peace agreement, I can say without a doubt that Colombia was crucial—that Plan Colombia

was crucial in helping us get there. From the very beginning, you, Mr. President, supported the risky and bold step of trying to achieve peace in our country. You were one of the first persons I confided my intentions to start a peace process back when many—the great majority—thought that it was basically a mission impossible. Many people warned me that it would be political suicide. Making war is so much easier than making peace. And you not only believed it was possible, you encouraged me to go ahead and gave me your full and enthusiastic support. Since then, you have walked by our side. And today, Mr. President, you stand with the Colombian people when we are on the verge of transforming this dream into reality.

I believe also that I speak for all the people in Latin America and the Caribbean, all the people who live south of the Rio Grande, when I say to you, thank you. Thank you, Mr. President, for your audacity in reestablishing diplomatic relations with Cuba. Thank you for understanding that peace in Colombia means peace for the entire region.

Peace will be the cherry on the cake of Plan Colombia and the start of a new chapter: a new chapter of collaboration and friendship between our two nations; a chapter that we have decided—and what a good name—to call *Paz Colombia*. Peace Colombia.

Peace will help us consolidate a new nation, a country that will be safer, more prosperous, more just and equitable, better educated, and of course, happier. We'll be a country—a confident nation that will continue to earn the trust and admiration of the entire world. And we will build this new country in cooperation, shoulder to shoulder, with a dear and true friend: the United States of America.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you. Thank you so much. I'm really proud of you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:23 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Martin and Esteban Santos, sons of President Santos; U.S. Special Envoy for the Colombian Peace Process Bernard W. Aronson; musicians Shakira Isabel Mebarak Ripoll, Carlos Vives, and Jeison "Jeihco" Castaño; actors Sofia Vergara and John Leguizamo; and racecar driver Juan Pablo Montoya.

Remarks on the National Economy and an Exchange With Reporters
February 5, 2016

The President. TGIF, everybody. I wanted to stop by, because as you're aware by now, America's businesses created another 158,000 jobs last month. After reaching 10 percent in 2009, the unemployment rate has now fallen to 4.9 percent, even as more Americans joined the job market last month. So this is the first time that the unemployment rate has dipped below 5 percent in almost 8 years. Americans are working.

All told, over the past 6 years, our businesses have added 14 million new jobs. Seventy-one straight months of private sector job growth extends the longest streak on record. Over the past 2 years, 2014 and 2015, our businesses added more jobs than any time since the 1990s.

Most importantly, this progress is finally starting to translate into bigger paychecks. Over the past 6 months, wages have grown at their fastest rate since the crisis. And the policies that I'll push this year are designed to give workers even more leverage to earn raises and promotions.

So unemployment, deficits, gas prices are all down. Jobs, wages, and the rate of the insured are up. I should mention, by the way, that since I signed Obamacare into law, nearly 18 million Americans have gained coverage, and our businesses have created jobs every month since, on net, all of them full-time jobs.

So, as I said at my State of the Union Address, the United States of America right now has the strongest, most durable economy in the world. I know that's still inconvenient for Re-

publican stump speeches as their doom-and-despair tour plays in New Hampshire. I guess you cannot please everybody.

That does not mean that we don't have more work to do. There is softness in the global economy. China is going through a transition. Europe's economy is still slow. A lot of the emerging markets are challenged. So that's all creating headwinds for a lot of U.S. companies who do business overseas. It makes it more difficult for us to sell exports. So we've got to pay attention to this, and we've got to take some smart steps this year to continue progress. And we also have to do more to make sure that the progress that we do make is broadly based and impacting folks up and down the income scales. The budget that I send to Congress on Tuesday is going to make sure that we can continue that progress. Talking down the American economy, by the way, does not make that progress.

My budget is going to offer more opportunities for Americans to get the education and job training that they need for a good-paying job. It will offer new ideas for benefits and protections that provide folks with a basic sense of security. We'll create more good-paying jobs not by subsidizing the past, but by investing in the future. And that's why we're going to be placing a big emphasis on clean energy. Private sector solar jobs, for example, are growing 12 times faster than the rest of the economy, and they pay better than average. That's one reason why my budget is going to double our investment in clean energy research and development by the end of the decade. That's going to help businesses create more jobs faster, it's going to lower the cost of clean energy faster, it's going to help renewable power compete with dirty fuels across America in a more effective way.

Those are some of the steps that are going to make sure our future is even stronger, a future that is worthy of the hard work and determination of the American people. The progress we've made in going from 10 percent down to under 5, that's a testament to American workers, American businesses, the American people being resilient and sticking to it. And my hope is, is that rather than hinder their progress, we're going to continue to help them make progress.

With that, have a great weekend. Enjoy the Super Bowl. I'm not telling you my pick—[*laughter*]—because the Bears aren't in it, and—but I'm hoping for a great game.

With that, Josh—is he back there?

Q. Yes.

The President. Josh, take it away.

Public Perceptions of the Economy

Q. How about a question?

Q. Yes, yes. You seemed to imply yesterday that you don't get enough credit. Were you——

The President. You know what, let—I'm going to—let me take a couple of questions here.

White House Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest. All right, thank you.

The President. Why not? Just, what the heck.

Q. It's Friday.

The President. I'm in a good mood. It's Friday.

Q. It's Friday. Throw us a——

The President. Go ahead.

Q. Okay. So you were implying yesterday, in a joking way, that you don't get enough credit——

The President. Oh, this is when I was talking to—with the Warriors——

Q. With the Warriors.

The President. Right, right.

Q. Okay, so were you again referring, as you did just now, to Republicans and their message, which you could say could be expected during an election? Or were you also referring to the fact that polls—like, 70—57 percent of Americans in polls say they don't think things are going well in this country. What—why do you think that is?

The President. Well, at the time, I was making a joke with a basketball team. But there's no doubt that while we have made significant progress—and I talked about this during the State of the Union—there is still anxiety and concern about the general direction of the economy. If you look at some of the surveys, people feel better about their circumstances, their finances, but they're not sure about the

future. And part of it is, there's still a pretty big carryover from the devastation that took place in 2007, 2008. If your home value drops in half or you lose a job that you thought you were secure in or your pension suddenly looks vulnerable, you're going to remember that. And so a lot of people still feel that.

And they're right to recognize that there are some longer term economic trends that we still have to tackle: that the economy is more dynamic and it churns faster and the pressure on companies to maximize short-term returns, oftentimes at the expense of long-term investment; the lack of loyalty sometimes to workers who have built those companies and are threatened to lay off—be laid off; the fact that wages and incomes up until the last 6 months haven't gone up as fast as corporate profits have or benefits at the very top. All those things people feel and they experience.

And so even though they know things are better, they're worried where are we going. And I think—so I think that the argument I'm making here and will continue to make during the course of this year is, we should be proud of the progress we've made. We have recovered from the worst economic crisis since the 1930s, the worst in my lifetime and the lifetime of most of the people in this room. And we've done it faster, stronger, better, more durably than just about any other advanced economy.

Had we adopted some of the policies that were advocated by Republicans over the last 4, 5, 6 years, we know that we probably would have done worse. And we know that because a lot of European countries adopted those policies, and they haven't yet gotten to the same place they were before the crisis. So evidence, facts are on our side. And this jobs report gives you one more indication that the facts are on our side.

I think that it is important for us then to understand how do we take the next step and make people feel more secure and feel more confident about the future. And that's why investments in education and job training; going after the high costs of higher education; making sure that issues like paid leave and family leave are put in place; raising the minimum wage so that if you're working full time, you're not in poverty; making sure that we're investing in transportation, infrastructure, and clean energy; going after the jobs of the future; investing in technology—all those things are a recipe for continued growth and increased security.

And as far as I can tell, those who are running down the economy and adding to the anxiety don't seem to have any plausible, coherent recipe other than cut taxes for the very folks who have been doing the best in this economy and somehow, magically, that's going to make other folks feel good.

Or alternatively, they argue that the reason you're feeling insecure is because immigrants or poor people are taking more and more of your paycheck. And that is just not true. The facts don't bear that out. That's not where the weaknesses in the economy are. That's not what's depressing wages for middle class families or making them more vulnerable to disruptions in this economy. And I want to keep on making that argument during the course of this year.

We should feel good about the progress we've made, understanding that we've still got more work to do. It's sort of like, I'm 54 now, so I got to work out harder to stay in shape. [*Laughter*] And if I'm feeling good in the gym, I want to acknowledge that what I'm doing is working. Otherwise, I'll just go off and have a big, double-bacon cheeseburger or something because I'll think, well, this isn't working.

No, if it's working, then we should be staying on that same path. That doesn't mean that I'm where I necessarily want to be. It doesn't mean that I stop doing some hard work to get where we need to go.

All right? I was only going to make two—I'm just going to take two. So, all right, go ahead.

Labor Force Participation Rate/Oil Prices/Oil Tax Policy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. How can you improve workforce participation levels? Because as much as people talk about the recovery, so few Americans are now, relatively speaking, in the job force, especially compared

to 2008. And if you wouldn't mind, sir, can you at least comment on the $10-per-barrel fee that we've heard so much about?

The President. On the first question, part of what was good in this jobs report is the fact that the participation rate, in fact, didn't drop. That wasn't the reason why unemployment dropped. More people are entering into the workforce. They feel more confident, and they're finding work.

But what is true is, is that we're still at a point where the labor participation rate is lower than it has been historically.

Q. Why?

The President. Some of that is explained by demographics. The population is getting older, and so you would expect that there is some decline. But it's not fully explained by Americans getting older. Some of this is still the hangover from what happened in 2007 and 2008. And this is part of the reason why we have to keep our foot to the accelerator in terms of doing the things that need to be done to keep the economy growing and keep it strong.

We should not let up from the progress that's been made so that the labor market continues to tighten, people feel more confident that if they go out and look for work that they can find it. There are particular cases where some folks have just been out of the labor market for a long time and may not be equipped for the jobs of today. And that's where we've got to target some special efforts.

I get a lot of letters from middle-age workers who got laid off, aren't confident about their current skills, and so have not yet reentered the workforce. They need to get retrained. And so that's a special group: folks in their late forties, early fifties, still far away from retirement, but feel like they can't adapt.

Obviously, there are young people, high school dropouts, folks in both rural communities and inner cities that just have—came of age right in the middle of this terrible recession and haven't gotten attached to the labor market yet. And so we've got to make special efforts to figure out how do we get them into job training programs or community college, and it allows them to get some skills.

So there's a wide set of strategies we can take on that, but it's all—it's going to require overall, though, a strong labor market for them to feel like it's worth it to make these efforts. And we want to keep making sure that the labor market is as strong as possible.

With respect to oil and energy, I'll probably make a larger speech about that and the direction that we need to go on this. The basic proposition is, is that right now gas is $1.80. And gas prices are expected to be low for a while, for the foreseeable future. That, overall, can be a good thing for the economy. But what is also important is that we use this period where gas prices are low to accelerate a transition to a cleaner energy economy because we know that's not going to last. Every one of us have seen cycles where gas prices go down and then they pop back up.

And the idea here is, is that we—if we say to oil companies—which, by the way, got a significant benefit when we, in the omnibus, allowed them for the first time to export oil; up until that point, domestic oil producers couldn't export. So if we say to them now, all right, oil companies, we know that you're having to retool, we know that prices are low right now, you're allowed to export, but what we're also saying is, is that we're going to provide—we're going to impose a tax on a barrel of oil—imported, exported* —so that some of that revenue can be used for transportation, some of that revenue can be used for the investments in basic research and technology that's going to be needed for the energy sources of the future. Then, 10 years from now, 15 years from now, 20 years from now, we're going to be in a much stronger position when oil starts getting tight again, prices start going up again.

* White House correction: Exported crude oil and refined fuels would not be subject to the per-barrel fee. The fee is designed to be paid by oil companies and would cover imported and domestically produced crude oil and refined fuels that are burned in the United States. This would maintain a level playing field for U.S. producers.

We will have further weaned our economy off of dirty fuels. We will have not just made environmental progress, but we'll also have a much stronger economy, a stronger infrastructure. We'll be creating the jobs of the future. And I think we'll look back and we'll say, that was a smart investment, that was a wise decision for us to make.

That—but the point is, it's right to do it now when gas prices are really low. And they will be low for quite some time to come, so it's not going to be a disruptive factor in terms of the economy. All right?

[*At this point, many reporters began speaking at once.*]

Okay, guys. Of course, they always say something. I only said two questions, but I hope you guys have a wonderful Super Bowl party. All right? Thank you, guys.

Q. Are you still in a good mood?

The President. I am in a good mood. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:31 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House.

Statement on the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
February 5, 2016

Thirteen years ago tomorrow, four First Ladies in Africa came together and declared an International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C). They knew that by targeting and holding back girls, this practice harms and holds back entire communities. Since then, countless others—from the Middle East to South Asia to here in the United States—have joined these women to say that FGM/C has no place in any community and undermines our efforts to celebrate and empower women and girls.

Some people say that FGM/C is a rite of passage, something families do to help prepare girls for adulthood or marriage. In my travels last year, I made clear my view that "there's no reason that young girls should suffer genital mutilation." Just because this is a tradition in some places does not make it right. This practice is harmful, and therefore wrong, wherever it occurs. That is why we have funded programming to combat FGM/C in places like Guinea, just as we have launched a range of actions here at home to stop the practice. In the United States, we have criminalized the transport of girls to undergo FGM/C, worked with religious leaders and community-based organizations to raise awareness—especially in some immigrant communities, where the pressures to engage in this practice remain—and provided grant opportunities for domestic NGOs implementing innovative prevention strategies.

Today we stand with communities here and around the globe working to prevent FGM/C. We call on girls and their families, teachers, health workers, community and religious leaders, and government officials to act together to make a difference. It's time to put an end to this harmful practice and to allow communities everywhere to meet their full potential by enabling women and girls to meet theirs.

NOTE: The statement referred to the late former First Lady Stella Obasanjo of Nigeria; former First Lady Chantal Compaore of Burkina Faso; former First Lady Henriette Conte of Guinea; and former First Lady Touré Lobbo Troaré of Mali.

The President's Weekly Address
February 6, 2016

Hi, everybody. One of the things that makes America great is our passion for innovation: that spirit of discovery and entrepreneurship that helps us meet any challenge.

One of the greatest challenges of our time is climate change. Over the last 7 years, we've made historic investments in clean energy that helped private sector companies create tens of thousands of good jobs. And today, clean power from the wind or the sun is actually cheaper in many communities than dirtier, conventional power. It's helped grow our economy and cut our total carbon pollution more than any other country on Earth.

That leadership helped bring nearly 200 nations together in Paris around the most ambitious climate agreement in history. And in Paris, we also launched one of the most important partnerships ever assembled to accelerate this kind of clean energy innovation around the world. Investors and business leaders including Bill Gates, Meg Whitman, and Mark Zuckerberg joined us, pledging their own money to help advance new technologies to the market. That's important because we'll only meet this challenge if the private sector helps lead the way.

As I said in my State of the Union Address, rather than subsidize the past, we should invest in the future. That's why the budget I will send to Congress this Tuesday will double funding for clean energy research and development by 2020. This will include new investments to help the private sector create more jobs faster, lower the cost of clean energy faster, and help clean, renewable power outcompete dirty fuels in every State.

And while Republicans in Congress are still considering their position on climate change, many of them realize that clean energy is an incredible source of good-paying jobs for their constituents. That's why we were able to boost clean energy research and development in last year's budget agreement. And I hope they support my plan to double that kind of investment.

Because it's making a difference across the country. In Idaho, our Battery Test Center is helping electric cars run longer on a single charge. In Ohio, entrepreneurs are pioneering new ways to harness wind power from the Great Lakes. In Tennessee, researchers are partnering with utilities to boost storage and solar power to create a more resilient electric grid.

The point is, all across the country, folks are putting their differences aside to face this challenge as one. Washington should do the same. That's how we're going to solve this challenge: together. And that's how we're going to give our kids and grandkids the future they deserve: one with a safe, secure, and prosperous planet.

Thanks everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:20 p.m. on February 5 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on February 6. In the address, the President referred to William H. Gates III, founder, technology adviser, and board member, Microsoft Corp.; Meg Whitman, president and chief executive officer, Hewlett Packard Enterprise; and Mark E. Zuckerberg, founder and chief executive officer, Facebook, Inc. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 5, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 6. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Sergio Mattarella of Italy
February 8, 2016

President Obama. It is my pleasure to welcome President Mattarella and his delegation to the Oval Office. The President has an extraordinarily distinguished career as an academic, as a jurist, as a public servant. He has the honor of being the first Sicilian to become President of Italy. As I mentioned, he's also a constitutional law professor, so I felt great affinity for him right away.

The bonds between Italy and the United States could not be closer. And this gave us an opportunity not only to reaffirm the friendship between the United States and Italy, but also the extraordinary strategic cooperation on a

wide range of very challenging issues that face the transatlantic community.

As a close NATO ally and a member of the counter-ISIL campaign, we discussed the situation in Iraq, in Syria. And I thanked the President for Italy's strong contribution to the efforts to train and advise police to participate in the progress that's being made there and to update him on the progress of the campaign going forward. And that includes the critical role that Italy will play in fortifying the Mosul Dam, an issue that is of great importance to the Iraqi people

We discussed the joint efforts of Italy, the United States and other of our partners in helping Libya form a Government that will allow us then to help them build out their security capacity and to push back against efforts by ISIL to gain a foothold in that country.

We spent a lot of time discussing the refugee crisis that's facing Europe and Italy in particular. And I indicated to the President that we view this not just as a European problem, but as a global problem, as a problem for the United States, as a strain on the transatlantic relationship, and indicated the ways in which I want to see the United States working in concert with our NATO partners and European Union partners to address the humanitarian crisis and also to make sure that we're going after some of the human trafficking networks that have been developing and are profiteering off the misery of others.

And from the work we're doing together in Afghanistan to the importance of maintaining our unified effort to bring about a peaceful resolution of the situation in Ukraine, to the opportunities that present themselves in finalizing a trade agreement through the T–TIP process, we agreed that joint and common action between the United States and Italy not only serves the interests of both our countries, but the broader transatlantic relationship that has underwritten so much peace and prosperity over the last several decades.

So, Mr. President, welcome. I understand you'll be traveling to New York and Houston. I'm sure that, wherever you go, you'll get the same warm reception because of not only the incredible ties between Italy and America, but also because of the extraordinary sacrifices that our peoples together have made to shape a better world.

President Mattarella. I wish to thank President Obama wholeheartedly for the invitation to come to Washington and for the wonderful reception and hospitality that we have received. This is a sign of friendship between Italy and the United States. It is a friendship that dates back 70 years, and we have known all these years that we can count on one another.

And it is also through the cooperation within the Atlantic alliance that we have been able to overcome, over time, the many demanding challenges and difficulties successfully. And it is through this closeness and friendship and cooperation that exist at present and will continue to exist in the future that we will be helped to overcome the many new challenges that will appear before us, and we will be able to defeat in this manner the enemies of peace, freedom, and human rights.

As President Obama has told you, we have agreed on the number—on the numerous issues and challenges that we are facing, not only in terms of actually identifying them, but also in determining how we wish to deal with them. So, on the subject of terrorism, which of course is engendering great violence and death all over the world, and then migration, we agree that we need a very balanced approach, a human—a humane approach in dealing with this matter, because we have to consider issues of security and the rights of the people that are affected.

And the President also mentioned the different theaters where there are crises: Syria, Iraq, Libya, for example. And it is through the cooperation, based on the Atlantic alliance, through the alliance itself, that we can hope to bring stability and security to these many different areas. This is, I think, very important to focus on the cooperation within the Atlantic alliance.

We also talked about our transatlantic economic and trade partnership, and this, of course, is a very important approach because it can help us to avoid in the future additional,

new economic and financial crises, because they would, of course, jeopardize the prosperity that has been achieved in the developing world and perhaps ward off or prevent any prosperity from being achieved in developing nations.

So these are very demanding challenges indeed. We need to know exactly how to govern them, how to resolve them. And I think that it is within the transatlantic framework that we can hope to be successful. And of course, Italy and the United States are on board together, all the time.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:19 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. President Mattarella spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Announcing New Cybersecurity Policy Initiatives
February 9, 2016

Well, we've made a lot of progress over the past 7 years on our economy. Unemployment is down. Deficits are down. Gas prices are down. Job creation, wages, the rate of Americans with health coverage are all up.

So as I said at the State of the Union, America is as strongly positioned as any country on Earth to take advantage of the opportunities of the 21st century. But what we're aware of is, we all have a lot of work to do, not only to try to maintain momentum, but to go at some of the structural issues and problems that may be impeding people from making progress, getting opportunity, and living the kind of lives for themselves and their children that we all want for every American.

The budget that we're releasing today reflects my priorities and the priorities that I believe will help advance security and prosperity in America for many years to come. These are proposals reflected in the budget that work for us and not against us. It adheres to last year's bipartisan budget agreement. It drives down the deficit. It includes smart savings on health care, immigration, tax reform.

My budget also invests in opportunity and security for all Americans through education and training, new ideas for retirement savings and unemployment insurance, and it invest in innovation: harnessing technology to tackle challenges like climate change through clean energy and transportation, as well as the initiative that Vice President Joe Biden is leading to make sure that we're going after cancer in an aggressive way. And it strengthens our national security by increasing defense spending and advancing our global leadership through diplomacy and through development.

Now, more and more, keeping America safe is not just a matter of more tanks, more aircraft carriers, not just a matter of bolstering our security on the ground. It also requires us to bolster our security online. As we've seen in the past few years and just in the past few days, cyber threats pose a danger not only to our national security, but also our financial security and the privacy of millions of Americans.

So I've joined with leaders from across my administration to, over the last several months, plan on how we are going to go after this in a more aggressive way. And today we're rolling out a new Cybersecurity National Action Plan, or CNAP, to address short-term and long-term challenges when it comes to cybersecurity. My budget includes more than $19 billion for cybersecurity, which is up by more than one-third. And with this plan, we intend to modernize Federal IT by replacing and retiring outdated systems that are vulnerable to attack.

And I just want to say as an aside here, one of the biggest gaps between the public sector and the private sector is in our IT space, and it makes everybody's information vulnerable. Our Social Security system still runs on a COBOL platform that dates back to the sixties. Our IRS systems are archaic, as with a whole host of other agencies that are consistently collecting data on every American. If we're going

to really secure those in a serious way, then we need to upgrade them. And that is something that we should all be able to agree on. This is not an ideological issue. It doesn't matter whether there's a Democratic President or a Republican President. If you've got broken, old systems—computers, mainframes, software that doesn't work anymore—then you can keep on putting a bunch of patches on it, but it's not going to make it safe.

We have 400 people in the Social Security Administration whose sole job is to continually deal with this ancient software because it's consistently breaking down or insecure. We have software in the Federal Government now where the software operator does not exist anymore, and yet we're expected to provide the kinds of service, security, and privacy to Americans based on these leaky systems. So that's going to have to change.

We're also going to reform the way the Government manages and responds to cyber threats. We'll invest in cybersecurity education. We're going to build on the work that we've already done to recruit the best talent in America in IT and in cybersecurity. And we're also going to create the first-ever Federal Chief Information Security Officer who can oversee these activities across agencies and across the Federal Government, as well as make sure that the Federal Government is interacting more effectively with the private sector, which obviously contains a huge amount of vital and critical infrastructure and has to be protected.

We're going to work throughout this process to make sure that security also means privacy. So with the help of companies like Google, Facebook, Microsoft, and Visa, we're going to empower Americans to be able to help themselves and make sure that they are safe online with an extra layer of security, like a fingerprint or a code sent to your cell phone.

And finally, I'm going to establish a new high-level Commission on cybersecurity to help us gather the best ideas from outside of Government to focus on long-term solutions. Some of these issues are ones that we can solve relatively quickly. But in area where technology is constantly evolving, we've got to make sure that we're setting up a long-term plan anticipating where IT is going, so—and anticipating where the cybersecurity threats are going to be. So we're going to work with Congress to appoint a broad, bipartisan group of top business, strategic, and technical thinkers. And I look forward to receiving their report by the end of this year to help guide not just my administration, but future administrations in how to think about this problem.

Government does not obviously have all the answers when it comes to this area. In fact, because of the explosion of the Internet, and its utilization by almost every person on the planet now, we're going to have to play some catchup. But this CNAP, this action plan that we've put forward, is a critical and vital start. It builds on the fine work that's been done and the lesson—hard lessons that have been learned by many agencies over the course of the last several years, some of the best practices that we've been able to establish. It builds on the U.S. digital team of top Silicon Valley engineers that we've been able to recruit to work in various agencies where they've got some problems that have cropped up.

But if we are able to execute this in an effective way, and if Congress provides us the budgetary support to make this happen—and they should; I spoke to the Speaker directly about this and indicated the degree to which this is an important bipartisan effort that we should all be concerned about—if we do this right, then not only are we going to be able to make Government safer and securer, the data that's collected safer and securer, but we're also going to be able to help individual families and businesses to protect those things that are most important to them and to realize their full potential in a digital age.

So I want to thank all the agencies who are represented here. The last point I'll make is, is that I'm going to be holding their feet to the fire to make sure that they execute on this in a timely fashion.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:19 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Executive Order 13718, which established the Commission on Enhancing National Cybersecurity and is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks to the Illinois General Assembly in Springfield, Illinois
February 10, 2016

The President. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. Oh, thank you so much.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, members of the General Assembly, my fellow Illinoisans: It's actually kind of fun to start a speech like that twice in one month. [*Laughter*]

What an incredible privilege it is to address this chamber. And to Governor Rauner, Senator Durbin, Members of Congress, Speaker Madigan, former Governor Pat Quinn, Mayor Langfelder and the people of Springfield: Thank you for such a warm welcome as I come back home. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you. It's good to be home. Thank you, guys. You're very nice. Thank you. Thank you. Look, it is great to see so many old friends like John Cullerton and Emil Jones. I miss you guys.

Audience member. Miss you! [*Laughter*]

The President. It's great to be in the State Capitol. Being here today calls to mind the first time I spoke on the senate floor, almost 20 years ago. And I was passionate, idealistic, ready to make a difference. Just to stand in that magnificent chamber was enough to fill me up with a heightened sense of purpose.

And I probably needed a little dose of reality when I first arrived. So one day, I rose to speak about a bill. And I thought I'd made some compelling points, with irrefutable logic. [*Laughter*] And I was about to sit down, feeling pretty good about myself, when Pate Philip sauntered over to my desk. Now, for the—there are some young people here, so for those of you who don't remember, Pate Philip was the senate majority leader at the time. He was a marine, and a big shock of white hair, stomped—chomped on a cigar, was so politically incorrect that it's you don't even know how to describe it. [*Laughter*] But he always treated me well. And he came by, and he slapped me on the back, he said: "Kid, that was a pretty good speech. In fact, I think you changed a lot of minds. But you didn't change any votes." [*Laughter*] Then, he signaled, and the gavel—and we got blown out. [*Laughter*]

So that was my first lesson in humility. The next came when I presented my own first bill. It was a simple piece of legislation that would make it a lot easier for Illinois manufacturers to hire graduating community college students. I didn't know any serious opposition, so I asked for a vote. And what I got was a good hazing. I assume that this custom still exists. [*Laughter*]

So a senior colleague put the vote on hold to ask: "Could you correctly pronounce your name for me? I'm having a little trouble with it." "Obama," I said. "Is that Irish?" he asked. [*Laughter*] And being in my early thirties at the time, I was a little cocky. I said, "It will be when I run countywide." [*Laughter*] "Now, that was a good joke," he said, but he wasn't amused. "This bill is still going to die."

And he went on to complain that my predecessor's name was easier to pronounce than mine, that I didn't have cookies at my desk like she did, how would I ever expect to get any votes without having cookies on my desk. "I definitely urge a no vote," he said, "whatever your name is." [*Laughter*]

And for the next several minutes, the senate debated on whether I should add an apostrophe to my name for the Irish or whether the fact that "Obama" ends in a vowel meant that I actually belonged to the Italians—[*laughter*]—and just how many trees had had to die to print this terrible, miserable bill, anyway.

And I was chastened. And I said, "If I survive this event, I will be eternally grateful and consider this a highlight of my legal and legislative career." And I asked for a vote. And initially, the tote board showed that it was going down, but at the last minute it flipped, and my bill passed. But I was duly reminded that I was

a freshman in the minority. And I want to thank all my former colleagues in both chambers for not letting me forget it.

Now, to be a rookie in the minority party, as I was, is not much fun in any legislature. And we were called "mushrooms," because we were kept in the dark and fed a lot of manure. [*Laughter*] But one benefit of being in such a position—not being invited into the meetings where the big deals were being made—is that I had a lot of time to get to know my colleagues. And many of us were away from our families, and so we became friends.

We went to fish fries together. And we'd go to union halls. We'd play in golf scrambles. We had a great bipartisan poker game at the Illinois Manufacturers' Association. Boro Reljic would host, and folks like Dave Luechtefeld and Terry Link, others, would join in. We'd eat downstairs, and I can't say I miss the horseshoes. [*Laughter*] But away from the glare of TV or the tweets or the GIFs of today's media, what we discovered was that despite our surface differences—Democrats and Republicans, downstate hog farmers, inner-city African Americans, suburban businesspeople, Latinos from Pilsen or Little Village—despite those differences, we actually had a lot in common. We cared about our communities. We cared about our families. We cared about America.

We fought hard for our positions. And I don't want to be nostalgic here. We voted against each other all the time. And party lines held most of the time. But those relationships, that trust we'd built meant that we came at each debate assuming the best in one another and not the worst.

I was reminiscing with Christine Radogno; we came in in the same class. And we were on opposite sides of most issues, but I always trusted her and believed that she was a good person. And if we had a bill that we might be able to work together on, it was a pleasure to work with her on. Or Dave Syverson, who—we worked together on the Public Health and Welfare Committee, and we got some important work done that made a difference in people's lives.

And we didn't call each other idiots or Fascists who were trying to destroy America. Because then we'd have to explain why we were playing poker or having a drink with an idiot or a Fascist who was trying to destroy America. [*Laughter*]

And that respect gave us room for progress. And after I'd served here for 6 years, my party finally gained the majority. Emil Jones became the president of the senate. And by then, I had made some friends across the aisle, like Kirk Dillard, who I believe is here today, and we were able to pass the first serious ethics reform in 25 years. And working closely with law enforcement, who knew by then that we cared about cops and sheriffs and prosecutors, and working with folks like John Cullerton, we passed Illinois's first racial profiling law, which was good for police officers and minority communities.

And because someone like my friend, John Bouman, who worked at the Shriver Center on Poverty Law, helped us build coalitions across the State, including with business, and was able to then reach out to Republicans, we were able to increase tax credits for the working poor and expand health insurance to children in need.

And we wouldn't bend on our most deeply held principles, but we were willing to forge compromises in pursuit of a larger goal. We were practical when we needed to be. We could fight like heck on one issue and then shake hands on the next. Somebody like Jesse White was able to travel around the State and people didn't even know what party he was necessarily from because he brought so much joy with the Tumblers and the work that they were doing.

So I want you to know that this is why I've always believed so deeply in a better kind of politics, in part because of what I learned here in this legislature. Because of what I learned traveling across the State, visiting some of your districts, before I was running Statewide, before I was a U.S. Senator, learning all the corners of this State, this most representative of States: a State of small towns and rich farmland and the world's greatest city; a microcosm of America, where Democrats and Republicans

and Independents and good people of every ethnicity and every faith shared certain bedrock values.

I just saw a story the other day showing that if you rank all 50 States across categories like education levels and household incomes and race and religion, the one State that most closely mirrors America as a whole is Illinois, this State.

And I learned by talking to your constituents that if you were willing to listen, it was possible to bridge a lot of differences. I learned that most Americans aren't following the ins and outs of the legislature carefully, but they instinctively know that issues are more complicated than rehearsed sound bites, that they play differently in different parts of the State and in the country. They understand the difference between realism and idealism, the difference between responsibility and recklessness. They have the maturity to know what can and cannot be compromised and to admit the possibility that the other side just might have a point.

And it convinced me that if we just approached our national politics the same way the American people approach their daily lives—at the workplace, at the Little League game, at church or the synagogue, with common sense and a commitment to fair play and basic courtesy—that there is no problem that we couldn't solve together.

And that was the vision that guided me when I first ran for the United States Senate. That's the vision I shared when I said we are more than just a collection of red States and blue States, but we are the United States of America. And that vision is why, 9 years ago today, on the steps of the Old State Capitol just a few blocks from here, I announced my candidacy for President.

Now, over these 9 years, I want you to know, my faith in the generosity and the fundamental goodness of the American people has been rewarded and affirmed over and over and over again. I've seen it in the determination of autoworkers who had been laid off, but were sure that they could once again be part of a great, iconic Americans industry. I've seen it in the single mom who goes back to school even as she's working and looking after her kids because she wants a better life for that next generation. I've seen it the vision and risk-taking of small-businessmen. I've seen it time and time again in the courage of our troops.

But it's been noted often by pundits that the tone of our politics hasn't gotten better since I was inaugurated—in fact, it's gotten worse; that there's still this yawning gap between the magnitude of our challenges and the smallness of our politics. Which is why, in my final State of the Union Address, and in the one before that, I had to acknowledge that one of my few regrets is my inability to reduce the polarization and meanness in our politics. I was able to be part of that here and yet couldn't translate it the way I wanted to into our politics in Washington.

And people ask me why I've devoted so much time to this topic. And I tell them it's not just because I'm President and the polarization and the gridlock are frustrating to me. The fact is we've gotten a heck of a lot done these past 7 years, despite the gridlock. We saved the economy from a depression. We brought back an auto industry from the brink of collapse. We helped our businesses create 14 million new jobs over the past 6 years. We cut the unemployment rate from 10 percent to 4.9 percent. We covered nearly 18 million more Americans with health insurance. We ignited a clean energy revolution. We got bin Laden. We brought the vast majority of our troops home to their families. Our—we got a lot done. We're still getting a lot done.

And our political system helped make these things possible, and the list could go on. There's no doubt, America is better off today than when I took office. [*Applause*] So I—see, I didn't want this to be a State of the Union speech—[*laughter*]—where we have the standing up and the sitting down. [*Laughter*] Come on, guys, you know better than that. [*Laughter*] But this will—[*applause*]—no, no, no. I mean, I've got a serious point to make here. I've got a serious point to make here because this is part of the issue, right? We have an importation of our politics nationally and on

cable and talk radio, and it seeps into everything.

The point I'm trying to make is, I care about fixing our politics not only because I'm President today or because some of my initiatives have been blocked by Congress. That happens to every President, happens to every Governor, happens to everybody who participates—anybody who participates in a democracy. You're not going to get a hundred percent of what you want all the time.

The reason this is important to me is, next year, I'll still hold the most important title of all, and that's the title of citizen. And as an American citizen, I understand that our progress is not inevitable. Our progress has never been inevitable. It must be fought for and won by all of us, with the kind of patriotism that our fellow Illinoisan, Adlai Stevenson, once described not as a "short, frenzied outburst of emotion, but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime." It requires citizenship and a sense that we are one.

And today, that kind of citizenship is threatened by a poisonous political climate that pushes people away from participating in our public life. It turns folks off. It discourages them, makes them cynical. And when that happens, more powerful and extreme voices fill the void. When that happens, progress stalls. And that's how we end up with only a handful of lobbyists setting the agenda. That's how we end up with policies that are detached from what working families face every day. That's how we end up with the well connected who publicly demand that government stay out of their business, but then whisper in its ear for special treatment.

That's how our political system gets consumed by small things when we are a people that are called to do great things: to give everybody a shot in a changing economy, to keep America safe and strong in an uncertain world, to repair our climate before it threatens everything we leave for our kids.

So that's what's on my mind as I come back to Illinois today. This is what will be a focus of mine over the course of this year and beyond: What can we do, all of us, together, to try to make our politics better? And I speak to both sides on this. Because all of you know, it could be better, and all of you would feel prouder of the work you do if it was better.

So, first, let's put to rest a couple of myths about our politics. One is the myth that the problems with our politics are new. They are not. American politics has never been particularly gentle or high minded, especially not during times of great change.

As I mentioned when I visited a mosque in Maryland last week, Thomas Jefferson's opponent tried to stir things up by suggesting he was a Muslim. So I'm in good company. [*Laughter*] But that's nothing compared to the newspaper which warned that if Jefferson were elected, "murder, robbery, rape, adultery, and incest will be openly taught and practiced." [*Laughter*] His Vice President, Aaron Burr, literally killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel. [*Laughter*] I don't want to even tell you what Andrew Jackson's opponents said about his momma. [*Laughter*] Lincoln, himself, was routinely called "weak, wishy-washy," a "yahoo," "an unshapely man," "the obscene ape of Illinois," and my favorite, a "facetious pettifogger." I don't know what that means—[*laughter*]—but it sounds insulting.

So, comparatively speaking, today is not that bad, as long as you've got a thick skin. [*Laughter*] As Harold Washington once said: "Politics ain't beanbag." It's tough. And that's okay.

There's also the notion sometimes that our politics are broken because politicians are significantly more corrupt or beholden to big money than they used to be. Now, there's no doubt that lobbyists still have easier access to the halls of power than the average American. There's a lot of work that we need to do to make sure that the system works for ordinary people and not just the well connected. That's true at the Federal level; that's true at the State level. Folks aren't entirely wrong when they feel as if the system too often is rigged and does not address their interests.

But, relative to the past, listen, I'm confident we've got enough rules and checks to prevent anyone in my Cabinet from siphoning whiskey tax revenue into their own pockets like

President Grant's administration did. Until FDR went after the ward bosses of Tammany Hall, they were—they controlled judges and politicians as they pleased: patronage, bribery, and money laundering. It's not as easy as it was to whip up tens of thousands of phantom votes, whether in Chicago or South Texas.

From the Teapot Dome to Watergate, history tells us we should always be vigilant and demand that our public servants follow the highest ethical standards. But the truth is that the kind of corruption that is blatant, of the sort that we saw in the past, is much less likely in today's politics. And the Justice Department and the media work hard to keep it that way. And that's a very good thing. So we don't want to romanticize the past and think somehow it's a difference in the people being elected.

And it also isn't true that today's issues are inherently more polarizing than the past. Remember, we endured 4 years of civil war that resulted in hundreds of thousands of dead Americans. This country was divided on a fundamental question.

Before Pearl Harbor, entering into World War II was a highly charged debate. The fault lines of Vietnam, the culture wars of the sixties—they still echo into our politics a half-century later.

We've been arguing since our founding over the proper size and role of government; the meaning of individual freedom and equality; over war and peace and the best way to give all of our citizens opportunity. And these are important debates that everybody should join, with all the rigor that a free people require.

My point is, the problem is not that politicians are worse, the problem is not that the issues are tougher. And so it's important for us to understand that the situation we find ourselves in today is not somehow unique or hopeless. We've always gone through periods when our democracy seems stuck. And when that happens, we have to find a new way of doing business.

We're in one of those moments. We've got to build a better politics, one that's less of a spectacle and more of a battle of ideas, one that's less of a business and more of a mission, one that understands the success of the American experiment rests on our willingness to engage all our citizens in this work.

And that starts by acknowledging that we do have a problem. And we all know it. What's different today is the nature and the extent of the polarization. How ideologically divided the parties are is brought about by some of the same long-term trends in our politics and our culture. The parties themselves have become more homogenous than ever. A great sorting has taken place that drove Southern conservatives out of the Democratic Party and Northern moderates out of the Republican Party, so you don't have within each party as much diversity of views.

And you've got a fractured media. Some folks watch Fox News; some folks read the Huffington Post. And very often, what's profitable is the most sensational conflict and the most incendiary sound bites. And we can choose our own facts. We don't have a common basis for what's true and what's not. I mean, if I listened to some of these conservative pundits, I wouldn't vote for me either. [*Laughter*] I sound like a scary guy. [*Laughter*]

You've got advocacy groups that, frankly, sometimes benefit from keeping their members agitated as much as possible, assured of the righteousness of their cause. Unlimited dark money—money that nobody knows where it's coming from, who's paying—drowns out ordinary voices. And far too many of us surrender our voices entirely by choosing not to vote. And this polarization is pervasive, and it seeps into our society to the point where surveys even suggest that many Americans wouldn't want their kids to date someone from another political party. Now, some of us don't want our kids dating, period. [*Laughter*] But that's a losing battle. [*Laughter*]

But this isn't just an abstract problem for political scientists. This has real impact on whether or not we can get things done together. This has a real impact on whether families are able to support themselves or whether the homeless are getting shelter on a cold day. It makes a difference as to the quality of the

education that kids are getting. This is not an abstraction.

But so often, these debates—particularly in Washington, but increasingly in State legislatures—become abstractions. It's as if there are no people involved, it's just cardboard cutouts and caricatures of positions. It encourages the kind of ideological fealty that rejects any compromise as a form of weakness. And in a big, complicated democracy like ours, if we can't compromise, by definition, we can't govern ourselves.

Look, I am a progressive Democrat. I am proud of that. I make no bones about it. I believe—[*applause*]. I'm going to make another point here. I believe that people should have access to health care. I believe they should have access to a good public education. I believe that workers deserve a higher minimum wage. I believe that collective bargaining is critical to the prospects of the middle class and that pensions are vital to retirement, as long as they're funded responsibly. [*Applause*]

Hold on a second. Hold on a second. [*Applause*] Sit down, Democrats. Sit down. Sit down, just for a second. I appreciate that, but I want to make this larger point. [*Laughter*]

I believe we're judged by how we care for the poor and the vulnerable. I believe that in order to live up to our ideals, we have to continually fight discrimination in all its forms. I believe in science and the science behind things like climate change and that a transition to cleaner sources of energy will help preserve the planet for future generations. I believe in a tough, smart foreign policy that says America will never hesitate to protect our people and our allies, but that we should use every element of our power and never rush to war.

Those are the things I believe. But here's the point I want to make: I believe that there are a lot of Republicans who share many of these same values, even though they may disagree with me on the means to achieve them. I think sometimes my Republican colleagues make constructive points about outdated regulations that may need to be changed or programs that, even though well intended, didn't always work the way they were supposed to.

And where I've got an opportunity to find some common ground, that doesn't make me a sellout to my own party. That applies—now—[*laughter*]. Well, we'll talk later, Dunkin. You just sit down. [*Applause*] So the—[*laughter*]. This is what happens: Everybody starts cherry-picking. [*Laughter*] One thing I've learned is, folks don't change. [*Laughter*]

So trying to find common ground doesn't make me less of a Democrat or less of a progressive. It means I'm trying to get stuff done.

And the same applies to a Republican who, heaven forbid, might agree with me on a particular issue or if I said America is great, decided to stand during a State of the Union. It's not a controversial proposition. [*Laughter*] You're not going to get in trouble.

But the fact that that's hard to do, that is a testament to how difficult our politics has become. Because folks are worried, well, I'm going to get yelled at by you, or this blogger is going to write that, or this talk show host is going to talk about me, and suddenly, I've got a challenger, and calling me a RINO or a not a real progressive.

So when I hear voices in either party boast of their refusal to compromise as an accomplishment in and of itself, I'm not impressed. All that does is prevent what most Americans would consider actual accomplishments, like fixing roads, educating kids, passing budgets, cleaning our environment, making our streets safe.

No, it cuts both ways, guys. See, suddenly, everybody is standing. This is fascinating to watch. [*Laughter*] The point is, it cuts both ways.

Our Founders trusted us with the keys to this system of self-government. Our politics is the place where we try to make this incredible machinery work, where we come together to settle our differences and solve big problems, do big things together that we could not possibly do alone. And our Founders anchored all this in a visionary Constitution that separates power and demands compromise, precisely to prevent one party or one wing of a party or one faction or some powerful interest from getting a hundred percent of its way.

So when either side makes blanket promises to their base that it can't possibly meet—tax cuts without cuts to services: "Everything will be fine, but we won't spend any money." War without shared sacrifice: "We're going to be tough, but don't worry, it will be fine." Union bashing or corporate bashing without acknowledging that both workers and businesses make our economy run. That kind of politics means that the supporters will be perennially disappointed. It only adds to folks' sense that the system is rigged. It's one of the reasons why we see these big electoral swings every few years. It's why people are so cynical.

Now, I don't pretend to have all the answers to this. These trends will not change overnight. If I did, I would have already done them through an executive action. [*Laughter*] That was just a joke, guys. Relax. [*Laughter*] A sense of humor is also helpful.

But I do want to offer some steps that we can take that I believe would help reform our institutions and move our system in a way that helps reflect our better selves. And these aren't particularly original, but I just want to go ahead and mention them.

First is to take—or at least reduce some of the corrosive influence of money in our politics. Now, this year, just over 150 families—150 families—have spent as much on the Presidential race as the rest of America combined. Today, a couple of billionaires in one State can push their agenda, dump dark money into every State—nobody knows where it's coming from—mostly used on these dark ads, everybody is kind of dark and the worst picture possible. [*Laughter*] And there's some ominous voice talking about how they're destroying the country.

And they spend this money based on some ideological preference that really is disconnected to the realities of how people live. They're not that concerned about the particulars of what's happening in a union hall in Galesburg and what folks are going through trying to find a job. They're not particularly familiar with what's happening at a VFW post——

[*At this point, a cell phone rang.*]

The President. ——somebody's phone's on—[*laughter*]—in Carbondale. They haven't heard personally from farmers outside of the Quads and what they're going through. Those are the voices that should be outweighing a handful of folks with a lot of money. I'm not saying the folks with a lot of money should have no voice; I'm saying they shouldn't be able to drown out everybody else's.

And that's why I disagree with the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision. I don't believe that money is speech or that political spending should have no limits or that it shouldn't be disclosed. I still support a constitutional amendment to set reasonable limits on financial influence in America's elections.

But amending the Constitution is an extremely challenging and time-consuming process, as it should be. So we're going to have to come up with more immediate ways to reduce the influence of money in politics. There are a lot of good proposals out there, and we have to work to find ones that can gain some bipartisan support, because a handful of families and hidden interests shouldn't be able to bankroll elections in the greatest democracy on Earth.

The second step towards a better politics is rethinking the way that we draw our congressional districts. And now, let me point this out. I want to point this out, because this is another case of cherry-picking here. [*Laughter*] This tends to be popular in States where Democrats have been drawing the lines among Republicans and less popular among Republicans where they control drawing the lines. So nobody's—let's be very clear here, nobody has got clean hands on this thing. Nobody has got clean hands on this thing.

The fact is, today, technology allows parties in power to precision-draw constituencies so that the opposition's supporters are packed into as few districts as possible. That's why our districts are shaped like earmuffs or spaghetti. [*Laughter*] And it's also how one party can get more seats even when it gets fewer votes.

And while this gerrymandering may insulate some incumbents from a serious challenge

from the other party, it also means that the main thing those incumbents are worried about are challengers from the most extreme voices in their own party. That's what's happened in Congress. You wonder why Congress doesn't work? The House of Representatives there, there may be a handful—less than 10 percent—of districts that are even competitive at this point. So if you're a Republican, all you're worried about is what somebody to your right is saying about you, because you know you're not going to lose a general election. Same is true for a lot of Democrats. So our debates move away from the middle, where most Americans are, towards the far ends of the spectrum. And that polarizes us further.

Now, this is something we have the power to fix. And once the next census rolls around and we have the most up-to-date picture of America's population, we should change the way our districts are drawn. In America, politicians should not pick their voters; voters should pick their politicians. And this needs to be done across the Nation, not just in a select few States. It should be done everywhere.

Now, the more Americans use their voice and participate, the less captive our politics will be to narrow constituencies. No matter how much undisclosed money is spent, no matter how many negative ads are run, no matter how unrepresentative a district is drawn, if everybody voted, if a far larger number of people voted, that would overcome in many ways some of these other institutional barriers. It would make our politics better.

And that's why a third step towards a better politics is making voting easier, not harder, and modernizing it for the way that we live now. Now, this shouldn't be controversial, guys. You liked the redistricting thing, but not letting people vote. I should get some applause on that too. Look—[*applause*].

Listen, 3 years ago, I set up a bipartisan Commission to improve the voting experience in America. It had the election lawyers from my campaign and from Mitt Romney's campaign. They got together outside of the context of immediate politics. And I actually want to thank this Assembly for moving to adopt some of its recommendations. Thanks to the good work of my dear friend, Senator Don Harmon, and many of you, there's a new law going into effect this year that will allow Illinoisans to register and vote at the polls on election day. It expands early voting, something that makes it a lot easier for working folks and busy parents to go vote.

Think about it. If you're a single mom, and you've got to take public transportation to punch a clock, work round the clock, get home, cook dinner on a Tuesday in bad weather, that's tough. Why would we want to make it so that she couldn't do it on a Saturday or a Sunday? How is that advancing our democracy? So this law will make a difference. I'm proud of my home State for helping to lead the way.

And we know this works. In 2012 and 2014, the States with the highest voter turnout all had same-day registration. So today I ask every State in America to join us: Reduce these barriers to voting. Make it easier for your constituents to get out and vote.

And I'd encourage this Assembly to take the next step. Senator Manar and Representative Gabel have bills that would automatically register every eligible citizen to vote when they apply for a driver's license. That will protect the fundamental right of everybody: Democrats, Republicans, Independents, seniors, folks with disabilities, the men and women of our military. It would make sure that it was easier for them to vote and have their vote counted.

And as one of your constituents, I think you should pass that legislation right away. I think the Governor should sign it without delay. Let's make the Land of Lincoln a leader in voter participation. That's something we should be proud to do. Let's set the pace, encourage other States across the country to follow our lead, making automatic voter registration the new norm across America.

Now, just during the course of this talk, it's been interesting to watch the dynamics, obviously. [*Laughter*] In part because so much of our politics now is just designed for short-term, tactical gain. If you think that having more voters will hurt you on election day, then sudden-

ly, you're not interested in participation. And if you think that the gerrymandering is helping you instead of hurting you, then you're not for those proposals.

We get trapped in these things. We know better. If we were setting up a set of rules ahead of time, and you didn't know where you stood, which party you were going to be in, if you didn't have all the data and the poll numbers to tell you what's going to give you an edge or not, you'd set up a system that was fairer. You'd encourage everybody to be part of it. That's what we learned in our civics books. That's how it should work.

The fact that we can't do that, that brings me to my last point, which is, even as we change the way system works, we also have a responsibility to change the way that we, as elected officials and as citizens, work together. Because this democracy only works when we get both right: when the system is fair, but also when we build a culture that is trying to make it work.

Recently, I've been thinking a lot about something a friend of mine, Deval Patrick, once said to his constituents when he was Governor of Massachusetts. He said, "Insist from us and from each other a modicum of civility as the condition for serving you." This is what he told voters. "Insist on us having a modicum of civility."

I think that's something that all of us, as Americans, have to insist from each other. Our children are watching what we do. They don't just learn it in school, they learn it by watching us, the way we conduct ourselves, the way we treat each other. If we lie about each other, they learn it's okay to lie. If we make up facts and ignore science, then they don't—they just think it's just their opinion that matters. If they see us insulting each other like school kids, then they think, well, I guess that's how people are supposed to behave. The way we respect—or don't—this—each other as citizens will determine whether or not the hard, frustrating, but absolutely necessary work of self-government continues.

And I've got daughters that are getting older now, and one of the most important things about being a parent, I think, is them just seeing what you do not when you're out in public, not when you're dealing with somebody important, but just how do you do—how do you treat people generally. And it makes me much more mindful. I want to live up to their expectations.

And in that same way, I want this democracy to live up to the people's expectations. We can't move forward if all we do is tear each other down. And the political incentives, as they are today, too often rewards that kind of behavior. That's what gets attention. So it will require some courage just to act the way our parents taught us to act. It shouldn't, but in this political environment, apparently, it does. We've got to insist to do better from each other, for each other.

Rather than reward those who'd disenfranchise any segment of America, we've got to insist that everybody arm themselves with information and facts and that they vote. If 99 percent of us voted, it wouldn't matter how much the 1 percent spends on our elections.

Rather than reward the most extreme voices or the most divisive language or who is best at launching schoolyard taunts, we should insist on a higher form of political discourse in our common life, one based on empathy and respect, which does not mean you abandon principle. It doesn't mean you're not tough.

Rather than paint those who disagree with us as motivated by malice, to suggest that any of us lack patriotism, we can insist, as Lincoln did, that we are not enemies, but friends; that our fellow Americans are not only entitled to a different point of view, but that they love this country as much as we do.

Rather than reward a 24/7 media that so often thrives on sensationalism and conflict, we have to stand up and insist, no, reason matters, facts matter, issues are complicated. When folks just make stuff up, they can't go unchallenged. And that's true for Democrats if you hear a Democrat make something up, and that's true for a Republican if you see a Republican cross that line.

Rather than accept the notion that compromise is a sellout to one side, we've got to insist on the opposite: that it can be a genuine victory

that means progress for all sides. And rather than preventing our kids from dating people in other parties—well, I may have issues about dating, generally—[*laughter*]—but we can trust that we've raised our kids to do the right thing and to look at the qualities of people's character, not some label attached to them.

And maybe, most of all, whenever someone begins to grow cynical about our politics or believes that their actions can't make a difference or it's not worth participating in, we've got to insist—even against all evidence to the contrary—that in fact they can make a difference. And in this job of being a citizen of the United States of America, that's a big deal. It's something we should revere and take seriously.

Now, Abraham Lincoln wasn't always the giant that we think of today. He lacked formal schooling. His businesses and his law practices often struggled. After just one term in Congress, his opposition to the Mexican-American War damaged his reputation so badly, he did not run for reelection. He was denounced as a traitor, a demagogue, an enemy sympathizer. He returned to his law practice and admitted he was losing interest in politics entirely.

And then, something happened that shook his conscience. Congress effectively overturned the Missouri Compromise, that flawed and fragile law that had prohibited slavery in the North and legalized it in the South, but left the question ultimately unsettled. And stunned by this news, Lincoln said he'd been roused "as he had never been before" over what it meant for America's future.

And so, here in Springfield, at the State fair, he got back in the game, and he delivered the first of his great antislavery speeches to a crowd of thousands. And over the next 6 years, even as he lost two more political races, his arguments with Douglas and others shaped the national debate. That's when he uttered those brilliant words on the steps of the Old State Capitol that "a house divided against itself cannot stand," that "this government cannot endure permanently, half slave, and half free."

He became the first Republican President and, I believe, our greatest President. And through his will and his words and, most of all, his character, he held a nation together, and he helped free a people.

And those victories did not solve all of our problems. He would be attacked at times for the compromises he was prepared to make by abolitionists and folks from his own side. It would be 100 years more until the law guaranteed African Americans the equal rights that they had been promised. Even 50 years after that, our march is not yet finished. But because Lincoln made that decision not to give up and not to let other voices speak for him, and because he held in his mind the strength of principle, but the vision, the ability to understand those who disagreed with him, and showed them respect even as he fought them—because of what he set in motion, generations of free men and women of all races and walks of life have had the chance to choose this country's course. What a great gift. What a great legacy he has bestowed us.

And that's the thing about America. We are a constant work of progress. And our success has never been certain, none of our journey has been preordained. And there's always been a gap between our highest ideals and the reality that we witness every single day. But what makes us exceptional—what makes us Americans—is that we have fought wars and passed laws and reformed systems and organized unions and staged protests and launched mighty movements to close that gap and to bring the promise and the practice of America into closer alignment. We've made the effort to form that "more perfect Union."

Nine years to the day that I first announced for this office, I still believe in that politics of hope. And for all the challenges of a rapidly changing world and for all the imperfections of our democracy, the capacity to reach across our differences and choose that kind of politics—not a cynical politics, not a politics of fear, but that kind of politics—sustained over the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime, that's something that remains entirely up to us.

Thank you, Illinois. God bless you. God bless America. It's good to see all you. I miss you guys. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:03 p.m. in the house chamber of the Illinois State Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to John J. Cullerton, president, Emil Jones, Jr., James "Pate" Philip, Rickey R. Hendon, Alice J. Palmer, and Kirk W. Dillard, former senators, and David S. Luechtefeld, Terry Link, Christine Radogno, Dave Syverson, and Kenneth Dunkin, senators, Illinois State Senate; Sen. Richard J. Durbin; Boro Reljic, former vice president, Illinois Manufacturers' Association; John Bouman, president, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law; Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White, in his capacity as founder and coach of the Jesse White Tumblers, a mentoring program for inner-city youth; Robert F. Bauer, former White House Counsel, and Benjamin L. Ginsberg, partner, Patton Boggs LLP, in their capacity as Cochairs of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration; and 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney.

Remarks in Springfield
February 10, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody. Oh, I see some familiar faces here. I've got Halstead over here. We've got—I see all kinds of folks in the audience. It is good to see all of you. And let me start by just saying that in addition to being President of the United States, I happen to be a voter in Illinois. And I couldn't be prouder of the fact that our senior Senator is one of the finest Senators in the country. My friend, Dick Durbin! Give Dick Durbin a big round of applause.

We were reminiscing a little bit in the back. Now, there was a little nostalgia going on here. And we were talking about the 2004 convention. So I had won the primary, I'm invited to speak at the convention; it's this great honor. And Dick tells the story of how right before I'm about to give the keynote address at the Democratic Convention, I'm looking a little nervous and a little stressed. And Dick comes over, and he says, "Listen, Barack, it's going to be fine." And I said, "I don't know, I don't think my speech is very good." Dick says, "No, no, really, it's going to connect, you're going to do fine." I said: "You know what, I've wrestled with this thing, I've worked on it. I just don't think it's going to really meet the moment." And Dick said: "Well, look, Barack, you know what, you know how much I've worked for you. One of the earliest people to endorse you, supported you the whole way. So, here, why don't you do this? You take my speech, but first, I've got to cross out Lithuanian, and we'll put Kenyan in there, and go ahead and deliver it, and I'll do whatever, I'll make something up." And according to Dick Durbin, that's exactly how I ended up being so successful at the Democratic Convention, stealing his speech.

Now, there's a little revisionist history there, but what is absolutely true is, is that I would not be a United States Senator and I certainly would not be President had it not been for the support of Dick Durbin. That is the truth. And I like Loretta Durbin even more than I like Dick Durbin. [*Applause*]

But what I said about Dick is actually true for a lot of people in this room. When I was speaking over at the capitol, I mentioned there was an article just recently, I think in the last couple days. They had looked at all the data, all the demographics of every State in the Nation to see what was the most representative State, what is the State that has the same mixture of people and regions and occupations and educational levels. And it turns out that the most representative State of the entire country is right here in Illinois.

[*At this point, there was a disruption in the audience.*]

If we've got an EMT, I think it looks like somebody dropped down. It's okay, they'll be all right. They were just standing too long. Just give them a little bit of air. I've been through this before. [*Laughter*] They'll be okay. They probably just—you've got to drink a little juice or something before you're standing too long.

EMT, are we back there? Yes. Plus, there's somebody back there who's grumpy because they did not get their nap. [*Laughter*] All right.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you too. We okay? All right. Why don't you get a chair at least. There you go, sweetheart. All right, she's good. Walking out on her own two feet.

So the reason this is important, the fact that Illinois is so representative is, is that, as I was explaining, when I first came down here as a State senator, I was in the minority. I didn't have a chance to talk to a lot—or get a lot of stuff done, because Pate Philip was the president of the Senate. He and I didn't share a lot of views in common. But it gave me a chance to get to know people. And I would go to fish fries and union halls, and I'd travel around the State and visit people in their districts. And you'd talk to hog farmers, and you'd talk to folks in inner cities, and you'd talk to suburban businesspeople, and you got a sense of what not only Illinois was all about, but what America was all about. And——

Audience member. We need 4 more years!

The President. Oh, definitely—no, we're not doing that. [*Laughter*] Not only because of the Constitution, but because, more importantly, Michelle would kill me. [*Laughter*]

But what it did was, it confirmed what I had already suspected, which is, there are a lot of differences in this country, and people come from different places, they're of different faiths, they've got different beliefs about certain issues. But you know, generally, folks are the same. People have same hopes, same dreams, same aspirations for their kids, same worries: trying to figure out how to pay the bills, trying to figure out, are their kids going to do as well as they did? There—and it was that common thread that allowed me then, when I finally got in the majority, to get some bills passed. And it was also during that time where I also got a chance to make sure——

[*A baby cried.*]

The President. ——yes, you're tired, I know! [*Laughter*] I don't know—Mom, she or he are just tired. [*Laughter*] I—oh, there you are up there. I hear you. You need to go to bed. [*Laughter*] I feel like that sometimes, but I can't say that to my staff. They wouldn't listen to me anyway.

But it's that sense that we all had something in common that actually led me to be able to make that speech in 2004. It was that sense that led me to announce for President of the United States. It was that sense that we have some common bonds that has motivated me over the last 9 years since I announced.

And that faith in the common values of the American people have been affirmed every single day. I mean, yes, politics in Washington can get ugly. And I talked a lot today at the capitol about the needs to change the politics. And it's not just because—it's not just a matter of changing elected officials. The system itself—the way our media is splintered up so some folks are watching Fox News and some folks are reading the Huffington Post, the fact of gerrymandering, and the fact that a lot of people don't participate—there are a lot of things that pull us apart.

But despite all that, every day I meet somebody who reminds me about why I'm so proud to do what I'm doing, why I'm so glad I went into public service.

Audience member. We're so proud of you!

The President. And—thank you. And—but, here's the main point that I wanted to make—and I'm not going to give a long speech because I just gave one—[*laughter*]—and I want to shake some hands. Yes, although, no selfies. I want to tell you ahead of time. Now, this is one thing that changed, by the way. [*Laughter*] If we had had smartphones when I ran for President, I'm not sure I would have run. Because everybody—folks just have their phones, they won't shake my hand anymore. They're just, like—[*laughter*]. It's, like, hey, I'm here, live in front of you. So we're not taking selfies, but I want to shake as many hands as possible.

But the point is that every day, I've been reminded of the goodness of the American people. And that all started with so many of you. As I look around the room, I see people I worked with in the State legislature. I see union leaders who supported me early on

when I didn't have much of a shot. I see some farmers who were wondering what the heck is this kid from Chicago doing down here? He got lost and took a wrong turn somewhere. But they took me in and fed me and had me shuck some corn. [*Laughter*]

I see people who worked on our campaigns. I see people who we worked on together to get kids health care that didn't have it or early childhood education that needed it or helped send some kid to college. All of you helped to shape me, and allowed me to do what I did. And some of you now have kids of your own that has—not as many of you have gray hair as I would have expected, given how much I have. [*Laughter*]

And this is just my opportunity to say thank you. I appreciate what you guys have done. And I could not have done what I did without the people here in Illinois and the people here in Springfield. It has been an extraordinary privilege. And I've got a lot of work left before I leave. But just in case I don't see you in the interim, I'll see you on the back end once I'm back in Illinois. But for now, I just want to let you know that it has been an extraordinary privilege, and it was because of all of you.

And I hope that you continue to work just as hard on behalf of folks here in Illinois and folks on the national level who are trying to make sure that everybody gets a fair shot and that we have a world that is safe and secure for our kids.

I said the other day, and I'll repeat in closing, I think it was Justice Brandeis who once said that the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. It's more important than the office of President. It's more important than a Congressman. Because citizen, that's the predicate on which our democracy works: your participation, your values, your vision. You guys have done an extraordinary job as citizens. And I'm looking forward to joining you—[*laughter*]—in standing alongside you for years to come.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Appreciate you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:57 p.m. at the Hoogland Center for the Arts. In his remarks, he referred to Billy Halstead, central committee chairman, Peoria County Democrats; Sen. Richard J. Durbin, who introduced the President, and his wife Loretta; and former State Sen. James "Pate" Philip of Illinois.

Statement on the Observance of Ash Wednesday
February 10, 2016

Today Michelle and I join our fellow Christians in marking Ash Wednesday. Lent is a season of reflection, repentance, and renewal: a time to rededicate ourselves to God and one another. We remember the sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ. We pray for all those who suffer, including those Christians who are subjected to unspeakable violence and persecution for their faith. And we join millions here at home and around the world in giving thanks for this sacred and solemn season that guides us toward the Easter celebration.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Marrakesh Treaty To Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled
February 10, 2016

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled, done at Marrakesh on June 27,

2013 (Marrakesh Treaty). I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, a report of the Secretary of State with respect to the Marrakesh Treaty that includes a summary of its provisions.

This copyright treaty, concluded under the auspices of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), advances the national interest of the United States in promoting the protection and enjoyment of creative works. The Marrakesh Treaty lays a foundation, in a manner consistent with existing international copyright standards, for further opening up a world of knowledge for persons with print disabilities by improving their access to published works.

The United States played a leadership role in the negotiation of the treaty, and its provisions are broadly consistent with the approach and structure of existing U.S. law. Narrow changes in U.S. law will be needed for the United States to implement certain provisions of the treaty. Proposed legislation is being submitted to both houses of the Congress in conjunction with this transmittal.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Marrakesh Treaty, and give its advice and consent to its ratification.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 10, 2016.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the United Nations Convention on Independent Guarantees and Stand-By Letters of Credit
February 10, 2016

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, subject to certain understandings set forth in the enclosed report, I transmit herewith the United Nations Convention on Independent Guarantees and Stand-By Letters of Credit (Convention), done at New York on December 11, 1995, and signed by the United States on December 11, 1997. The report of the Secretary of State, which includes an overview of the proposed Convention, is enclosed for the information of the Senate.

As a leader in transactional finance, the United States participated in the negotiation of this Convention at the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law with the support of U.S. commercial and financial interests. The Convention establishes common rules on stand-by letters of credit and other independent guarantees, instruments that are essential to international commerce, and thereby reduces the uncertainty and risk that may be associated with cross-border transactions. With two minor exceptions, the Convention's provisions are substantively similar to the uniform State law provisions in the Uniform Commercial Code Article 5 (Letters of Credit), which all States and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands have enacted.

Ratification by the United States of this Convention can be expected to encourage other countries to become parties to the Convention. While eight countries currently are parties to the Convention, having a greater number of parties to the Convention would promote the stability and efficiency of international commerce.

The Convention has been endorsed by leading banking and business associations in the United States.

The Convention would be implemented through Federal legislation to be separately transmitted by my Administration to the Congress.

I recommend, therefore, that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Convention and give its advice and consent to its ratification, subject to certain understandings set forth in the enclosed report.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 10, 2016.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the United States-Dominican Republic Extradition Treaty
February 10, 2016

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Extradition Treaty between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Dominican Republic (the "Treaty"), signed at Santo Domingo on January 12, 2015. I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to the Treaty.

The Treaty would replace the extradition treaty between the United States and the Dominican Republic, signed at Santo Domingo on June 19, 1909. The Treaty follows generally the form and content of other extradition treaties recently concluded by the United States. It would replace an outmoded list of extraditable offenses with a modern "dual criminality" approach, which would enable extradition for such offenses as money laundering and other newer offenses not appearing on the list. The Treaty also contains a modernized "political offense" clause and provides that extradition shall not be refused based on the nationality of the person sought. Finally, the Treaty incorporates a series of procedural improvements to streamline and speed the extradition process.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Treaty, and give its advice and consent to ratification.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 10, 2016.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the United Nations Convention on the Assignment of Receivables in International Trade
February 10, 2016

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, subject to certain declarations and understandings set forth in the enclosed report, I transmit herewith the United Nations Convention on the Assignment of Receivables in International Trade, done at New York on December 12, 2001, and signed by the United States on December 30, 2003. The report of the Secretary of State, which includes an overview of the proposed Convention, is enclosed for the information of the Senate.

The Convention sets forth modern uniform rules governing the assignment of receivables for use in international financing transactions. In particular, the Convention facilitates the use of cross-border receivables financing by: (a) recognizing the legal effectiveness of a wide variety of modern receivables financing practices; (b) overriding certain contractual obstacles to receivables financing; and (c) providing clear, uniform conflict-of-laws rules to determine which country's domestic law governs priority as between the assignee of a receivable and competing claimants.

As a global leader in receivables financing, the United States actively participated in the negotiation of this Convention at the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law with the support of U.S. business interests. Drawing on laws and best practices prevalent in the United States and other countries where receivables financing flourishes, the Convention would promote the availability of capital and credit at more affordable rates and thus facilitate the development of international commerce. Widespread ratification of the Convention would help U.S. companies, especially small- and medium-sized enterprises, obtain much-needed working capital financing

from U.S. banks and other lenders to export goods, and thereby help create more jobs in the United States.

The rules set forth in the Convention do not differ in any significant respect from those contained in existing U.S. law. In particular, in virtually all cases application of the Convention will produce the same results as those under the Uniform Commercial Code Article 9, which all States and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands have enacted.

I recommend, therefore, that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Convention and give its advice and consent to ratification, subject to certain declarations and undertakings set forth in the enclosed report.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 10, 2016.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Beijing Treaty on Audiovisual Performances
February 10, 2016

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Beijing Treaty on Audiovisual Performances, done at Beijing on June 24, 2012 (Beijing Treaty). I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, a report of the Secretary of State with respect to the Beijing Treaty that includes a summary of its provisions.

This copyright treaty, concluded under the auspices of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), advances the national interest of the United States in promoting the protection and enjoyment of creative works. The Beijing Treaty provides a modern international framework for the rights of performers in motion pictures, television programs, and other audiovisual works, similar to that already in place for producers of such works, for authors, and for performers and producers of sound recordings, pursuant to other WIPO copyright treaties the United States has joined.

The United States played a leadership role in the negotiation of the treaty, and its provisions are broadly consistent with the approach and structure of existing U.S. law. Narrow changes in U.S. law will be needed for the United States to implement certain provisions of the treaty. Proposed legislation is being submitted to both houses of the Congress in conjunction with this transmittal.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Beijing Treaty, and give its advice and consent to its ratification, subject to a declaration pursuant to Article 11 of the Beijing Treaty as described in the accompanying Department of State report.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 10, 2016.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the United Nations Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts
February 10, 2016

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, subject to certain declarations and understandings, I transmit herewith the United Nations Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts (Convention), done at New York on November 23, 2005, and entered into force on March 1, 2013. The report

of the Secretary of State, which includes an overview of the Convention, is enclosed for the information of the Senate.

The Convention sets forth modern rules validating and facilitating the use of electronic communications in international business transactions. The Convention will promote legal uniformity and predictability, and thereby lower costs, for U.S. businesses engaged in electronic commerce.

The Convention's provisions are substantively similar to State law enactments in the United States of the 1999 Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (UETA), and to the governing Federal law, the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act, Public Law 106–229 (June 30, 2000). Consistent with the Federal law, all States have enacted laws containing the same basic rules on electronic commerce, whether based on UETA or on functionally equivalent provisions. The Federal statute allows States that enact UETA, or equivalent standards, to be subject to their State law, and not the corresponding provisions of the Federal law.

The United States proposed and actively participated in the negotiation of the Convention at the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law. Accession by the United States can be expected to encourage other countries to become parties to the Convention, and having a greater number of parties to the Convention should facilitate electronic commerce across borders.

The Convention would be implemented through Federal legislation to be proposed separately to the Congress by my Administration.

The Convention has been endorsed by leading associations and organizations in this area, including the American Bar Association and the United States Council on International Business. The United States Government worked closely with the Uniform Law Commission regarding the negotiation and domestic implementation of the Convention.

I recommend, therefore, that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Convention and give its advice and consent to ratification, subject to certain understandings and declarations.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 10, 2016.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in Atherton, California

February 11, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! It is so good to see all of you. Partly because, yesterday I had a wonderful time going back to my home State of Illinois. I was in the State capitol and had a chance to revisit the place where I really started my political career, and it was 16 degrees. [*Laughter*] Now, I'm not saying that this perfect 70-degree—[*laughter*]—landscape is the only reason I'm happy to see you. [*Laughter*] But it doesn't hurt. It is gorgeous.

And I want to obviously start off by thanking Steve and Anita and Matthew and Christie for their hospitality here today. They have been extraordinary friends from the start. There are those folks who got involved before people could pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] And this is a family that has had my back every step of the way on this incredible journey.

But I also want to thank all of you, the committee that helped put this together. As I look around, I see folks who have been there through thick and thin, through all the ups and downs. And I could not be prouder to be part of this movement that you helped to build. So thank you very much. It means a lot. Thank you.

I want to acknowledge also Henry Muñoz, our DNC chair, who has done great work. There he is in the back. I think he was on his cell phone when I called his name out. [*Laughter*]

Steve, I think, gave you a little bit of context. I want to build on this. I had a chance to deliver my last State of the Union Address a few weeks back, and it was bitter-sweet. On the one hand, you're thinking, I've got so much more to do and——

Audience member. Four more years!

The President. Oh, no, definitely not. [*Laughter*] Not only is there a constitutional provision, but more importantly, Michelle would kill me. [*Laughter*]

But there's so much more to do, so many more laws we'd like to pass and administrative actions that need to be taken. But on the other hand, there was great satisfaction because we could look back on where we were when we came into office and take enormous pride in the way in which not simply this administration, but the country rose up from extraordinarily difficult times. And because of the resilience and the strength of the American people, we were able to avert a Great Depression, to rebuild the economy on a stronger foundation, drop an unemployment rate from 10 percent down to 4.9 percent. See job growth continue essentially over the last 6, 7 years, each and every month; the manufacturing sector bouncing back, the auto industry that was on the verge of collapse now producing more and better cars than ever before and more fuel-efficient cars.

Doubling the production of clean energy. Wind power we've increased now by—increased threefold, solar power tenfold. Last year, we actually produced more clean energy than we did conventional energy, in terms of bringing new energy on line.

Eighteen million people have health care that didn't have it before. And although there were those who were absolutely certain that not only would the Affordable Care Act collapse the economy and stunt job growth, but they were sure that it would accelerate the cost of health care. And since the Affordable Care Act passed, health care inflation has actually gone up more slowly than any time in the last 50 years, over the last several years. So it has not only helped people, but it has also begun the long process of making our health care system more effective and more efficient and making sure that people get good, quality care at reasonable costs.

Last year, we saw record high school graduation rates. The reforms that we've initiated in the education system from preschool all the way up through the university systems have made a difference in the lives of millions of kids. We had more young people enroll in college than ever before last year.

We've seen millions of young people who could afford to go to college able to finally afford it because we changed the rules so that instead of having banks serve as middlemen and take billions of dollars out of the student loan system, we started giving that money directly to students and, as a consequence, saved tens of billions of dollars that would allow more young people to go to college than ever before.

We ended the war in Iraq. We brought back—we ended the war in Afghanistan. We brought back tens of thousands of troops. The vast majority of them have returned home. We were able to make sure that Iran would not get a nuclear weapon, and we did so without starting another war.

So I've got a pretty long list. We could keep on going. [*Laughter*] But here's the issue. The incredible success we have had together is not a reason for complacency, it's actually a spur to further action. We know that our job isn't finished. We know that we've got a lot more work to do. So we've got a low unemployment rate, but it could be lower. And over the last 6 months, we've seen wages go up, but we're still looking at 20 years in which, for middle class families, income and wages have not gone up at the same pace as corporate profits have.

There's still growing inequality in our economy that has to be addressed, not only because it distorts our economy and makes it less productive than it could be, but also because it's starts distorting our politics and empowering a handful of people at the expense of the many.

We know that with respect to health care, there are still millions more who could be insured if State governments did what they should in terms of expanding Medicaid. We know that, for example, here in California, the unemployment—the uninsured rate went

down much faster because we had a State that was cooperating and working with us and doing what it needed to do. And in places where those States have resisted, oftentimes even though they would save money if they would just go ahead and work with us and abandon their ideological opposition, we haven't made as much progress.

We know that there's still too many kids across California and all across the country that don't have equal opportunity. They're not in the same position that Malia and Sasha and many of your children are in terms of getting an outstanding education that prepares them for a career in the 21st century. And we know that that's not right, that if there's one thing that is at the heart of what America is about, it's the notion that it doesn't matter where you're born, or who your parents are, what your last name is, you should be able to make it if you're willing to try. And we, as a group, collectively, our country should be giving people—our children—the tools that they need to succeed. We know that's true. And we're not there yet.

We know that there are young people who even when they do get to college are burdened enormously by mountains of debt and that we've got to make college not just more accessible, but also more affordable. And although we've made progress and strides in that area, we've still got more work to do.

We understand that when it comes to climate change, there is such a thing as being too late. And I actually want to—I haven't remarked on this publicly—the Supreme Court did something unusual this week. The centerpiece of our Climate Action Plan involves working with States like California to come up with a strategy for reducing their carbon emissions. We provide States a lot of flexibility and a long runway to do it. But we say we've got to do it.

And we do so under the Clean Air Act, which the Supreme Court itself—this Supreme Court—has said requires the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate carbon emissions if it's shown, as scientists have shown, that it's going to be damaging to the public health. So we're very confident that we're on strong legal footing here. But the Supreme Court issued a stay while the case was being decided on the merits as to whether or not—or said, you can't keep going forward until we've made a decision on this.

One of the reasons I want to talk about this is because in the last couple days, in conversations, I've heard people say, oh, the Supreme Court struck down the Clean Power Plan rule. That's not true. So don't despair, people. [*Laughter*] This is essentially a legal decision to simply say, hold on until we've had a chance to review the legality of it. And we are very firm in terms of our legal position here. As I said, this Supreme Court has said the Environmental Protection Agency is required to regulate carbon emissions if it's a threat to the public health. And we clearly can show that that's the case.

But the reason I bring this up now is to underscore the fact that in what is going to be an enormous generational challenge, there are going to be people who are constantly pushing back, and trying to make sure that we cling on to the old, dirty fuels and an economy built on the polluting, carbon-emitting economic strategy that we need to be moving away from.

We need to be investing in the future, not in the past. Instead of subsidizing to the tune of several billion dollars a year the oil industry, we need to be making sure that we continue to make enormous progress in solar and in wind and in battery technologies and all the things that promise a capacity for us to generate enormous power without destroying the planet for our kids and our grandkids.

And we can't take the work that we've done so far for granted. I could not be prouder that we helped to mobilize 200 nations around the world who said this is a problem and we're going to collectively work to deal with it. That's the essence of American leadership. But that American leadership depends on us. It depends on an administration that believes in science, for example. It depends on making sure that we show it is a lie that somehow we have to choose between economic progress and environmental protection.

All of which brings me to the moment we're in right now. I am not going to be on the ballot again, ever in my life.

Audience members. Aww.

The President. No, this is a really good thing. [*Laughter*] It doesn't mean that I'm not going to be very active in the public life of this country, because, as I said in the speech that I made in Springfield yesterday, quoting Justice Brandeis, the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. And so you and I fellow citizens, our obligations don't go away just because my name is not on the ballot.

It is just as important, we have to be just as passionate about making sure that progress is sustained. And what that requires is that we win back the Senate of the United States so that Democrats are able to move forward the agendas that we care about so deeply. It means that we make progress in winning back the House so that California's own Nancy Pelosi can once again be Speaker of the House. And it means that we make sure that a Democrat replaces me in the White House to carry on the legacy that we're pushing forward.

Look, it's an interesting political moment, right? [*Laughter*] And it's still early in the process. And there's a tendency, I think, for commentators to hyperventilate, because it's good entertainment value, and so every twist and turn, and various candidates pop up and then vanish, and all of this is somehow determinative of what's going to happen. And then, 3, 4 months later, nobody remembers what everybody was—what all the fuss was about because we get down to the real business of electing a President.

But here's what is true: that despite all the progress we've made, despite the fact that the country is indisputably, demonstrably better today than it was when I took office on just about every measure, what is true is, is that people are anxious. People remember what happened in 2007, 2008, and they think, well, if my home values could drop that fast, if my pensions could shrink that drastically, then maybe I'm not as secure as I thought I was, and I can't trust not only the institutions of the private sector, but also government to look out for me. And that makes people concerned.

And people are deeply concerned about inequality in the sense that the system is rigged against ordinary folks. And they're not wrong that lobbyists and narrow special interests have disproportionate influence in Congress, and that big money and unaccountable, undisclosed money is distorting our politics in ways that are going to be damaging over the long term.

And that disquiet, that concern is expressing itself in the Republican Party as well as the Democratic Party. And we have to listen to that, and we have to pay attention to that and be mindful of it. Because when people are scared, then strange things can happen in politics. When people are nervous and feel threatened, then we can get a politics that is not about bringing people together, but is about "us" and "them," and looking for somebody to blame.

And part of my speech in the State of the Union was to address that and remind us that this country never moves forward when it's based on "us" and "them." It moves forward when it's based on us, period. We the people. And if there's one thing that I've said I regret—and I continue to insist upon this—that the rancor and the meanness and the schoolyard taunts of our current political climate have gotten worse, not better, during the course of my Presidency.

Audience member. Not your fault.

The President. Well, you know, I'm the President, so—it's not a matter of fault, it's a matter of responsibility, and it's a matter of how do we make it better. And that's why I've been talking about this.

But for you, all of you as Democrats, I just want to repeat something that I said yesterday. I am a proud progressive Democrat. And I believe that we have obligations to the poor and the vulnerable. I believe in fighting discrimination in every walk of life. I believe that the economy grows faster when everybody gets a fair shot, not just the few. I believe that everybody should have health care in a country as wealthy as ours and that every child should get

a decent education. And I believe that when it comes to our foreign policy, we should be tough and smart and defend ourselves against any possible threat, but that diplomacy matters too and that we should never rush to war.

So there are a core set of values and principles that have guided me. But I also believe that as we fight for those principles, we have to understand this is a big country with a lot of points of view. And if I were having this same conversation in some other States in some other communities, they might disagree with me on just about everything I say, and yet they love this country just as much as we do. They are just as committed to making sure their kids have a good future as we do.

And so we can argue hard, and we can push back against some of the policies that they're promoting that I think would be extraordinarily damaging to the country, and we can do that while still insisting that there's room for common ground and there's a possibility for compromise when possible, and by the way, that change in this country—powerful change—never happens in one fell swoop, but it is a process of us diligently pushing every step of the way to move the country in a better direction.

That's how Social Security got started. It was a small program, excluded a lot of people. African Americans oftentimes couldn't benefit. A lot of the benefits themselves were meager. And yet it became one of the cornerstones in lifting entire generations of senior citizens out of poverty. That's how Medicaid got started. Every significant social advance we've made, it's taken years of stick-to-itness, and fight.

And so, more than anything, that's what I want to leave all of you with: the sense that this is not a one-shot deal. This never was. When I first appeared way back when, Steve, here in this house, and when I first announced that I was running for President, I always remind people I didn't say, "Yes, I can," I said, "Yes, we can." And when I talked about change we can believe in, I didn't say "Change we can believe in next week." [*Laughter*]

What I tried to describe was a process whereby we as citizens engaged in the hard, often frustrating work of self-governance. And if we were committed to that process, if we did it the right way, then things would get better. That's what's happened. And that's what we have to continue. And so my hope is, is that all of you are just as engaged, feel just as great a sense of urgency today as you did back in 2008. I want us to see just as much progress 8 years from now as we have made over the last 8 years.

We've got outstanding candidates who share our values. And we've got opponents on the other side who may not share our prescriptive beliefs, may be wrong on a whole host of issues, but who are fellow Americans, and we have to take into account how we end up winning the elections and ultimately governing.

And I'm confident we can do that. And the reason I'm confident is because of you. I've seen what you've accomplished. I've seen the support that you've provided. I see the young people like Christie and Matthew and Malia and Sasha. And this next generation is just full of remarkable life and ideas, and they know what's right and what's wrong. And they know to treat people fairly, regardless of what they look like, or where they come from, or who they love. And we're going to be in good hands as they move into leadership. But we've got to pave the way for them. That's our job. And I know you all are up to it.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. at the residence of Steve Westly and Anita Yu. In his remarks, he referred to Matthew and Christina Westly, children of Mr. Westly and Ms. Yu; and Henry R. Muñoz III, national finance committee chair, Democratic National Committee. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic Hope Fund Reception in Los Angeles, California
February 11, 2016

Thank you, guys! Thank you. It is so good to see all of you. It is good to be back in California. Before we came here, I went to my home State of Illinois. I love Illinois. It is, I believe, one of the greatest States in the country, but it's colder. [*Laughter*] It feels better here, right now, in February.

But let me begin by thanking Aaron and Danny and Gabriel for their hospitality. We are so appreciative of them. I want to thank our DNC vice chair, Lena Kennedy, our dear friend who brought her adorable grandchildren with her tonight. Although I think it's a school night, so we're going to have to get them home soon. Henry Muñoz, our DNC finance chair is here. Thank you, Henry.

And then we've got John Legend and his adorable wife Chrissy and soon-to-be baby. And I wanted to tell this story. All of you know how talented John is. All of you know how gorgeous Chrissy is. All of you know about the causes they care about. But some of you may not know that when I was running in 2007, 2008, and I had not yet won Iowa, and a lot of people still could not pronounce my name, at the Jefferson-Jackson dinner in Iowa, John Legend came to perform. And he has been one of my earliest supporters. He has worked with us on a whole range of issues, including most recently "My Brother's Keeper," which is designed to make sure that young people who are disadvantaged and potentially traveling down the wrong path are given a hand up. He's just a good man. And Chrissy is just a wonderful woman. And I am so grateful, and Michelle is grateful, that they're our friends. So we just wanted to give them a big shout-out. And I'm going to give him tips about raising girls. [*Laughter*] Because girls, they'll play you. [*Laughter*] They will. They will. Their daddies, they'll just be, like, pulling all those strings.

At my State of the Union Address, I mentioned this was going to be my last one and that I still have an enormous amount that I want to get done over the next 10 months—12 months, 11½ months. Somebody is keeping a daily calendar. [*Laughter*] But I also wanted to remind people a little bit about the journey that we had traveled. Remind people that when we came into office, the economy was on the verge of collapse. Remind people that we were losing 800,000 jobs a month. Remind folks that we were still in the midst of two wars. Remind people that we were still the only advanced nation on Earth that did not provide affordable coverage to people who, in some cases, were losing their homes or going bankrupt because they got sick.

We still had "don't ask, don't tell" in place, which meant that people who were proudly serving and loving this country couldn't openly be with the persons that they loved. We had a lot of stuff to do. And I keep a little checklist in my desk of the commitments I made when I ran for office. And we haven't gotten 100 percent of what I wanted to get done, but we got about 80. And the unemployment rate went from 10 percent down to 4.9. And 18 million people have health insurance that didn't have it before. And we doubled clean energy and reduced our carbon footprint, and we are on the path to deal with climate change in a serious way for the next generation.

And we ended "don't ask, don't tell." It don't exist no more. We ended two wars. Brought the vast majority of our troops back home. We have expanded access to college for millions of young people who couldn't afford it. We have, on every single metric—whether you're talking about the auto industry, whether you're talking about our investments in basic science and research—we have made progress. The country is indisputably better off now than it was when I came into office.

Now, I say that not to boast, not to take a full accounting, because I've got a lot more I want to do, and history will tend to sorting out what happened. And I certainly don't say all those things to be complacent, because right now, as we speak, there are children in this city who have no place to sleep or don't have enough to eat. There are young people in this city and

around the country who are just as talented as me or John and yet are on their way to jail because they didn't see any options, any alternatives. As we speak, we still have brave men and women who are trying to help the Iraqis defeat ISIL, and we are still maintaining around the clock intelligence and military officers who are making sure that we prevent the kinds of tragedies that we saw in San Bernardino.

Climate change is still a problem. And we've got a long way to go, despite the Paris conference, in mobilizing the world to deal with it in a serious way so that our children and our grandchildren are not threatened by a warming planet. There are still millions of people who don't have health insurance because the other side decided to politicize this in a way that has prevented their own constituents from getting health care through the expansion of the Medicaid. We still got to fight for that.

Across the board, we've still got a lot of work to do. There are just a lot of ordinary, hard-working people who are still having trouble paying the bills at the end of the month or are worried about whether they can ever retire or save enough to help their kids go to school. There are still gay or lesbian youth who are being bullied and threatened and feel isolated and alone.

So our work is not done. But when we look at what we have accomplished over the 7 years, it should fortify us. It should make us feel as if change is possible. It doesn't mean it happens overnight. It doesn't mean that you always get 100 percent of what you want. This is a big, complicated, diverse country. And there are a whole bunch of people who genuinely disagree with me on a whole bunch of stuff, and they love the country just as much as I do. And the political process, the design of our government, is such that change a lot of times is slower than we want.

But we should take comfort in the fact that by doing the hard work of democracy, by engaging in the hard work of citizenship, we have moved the needle and people are better off than they were. And what that means is, is as we look to the future, we need to make sure that everybody here is feeling the same sense of urgency and the same sense of excitement and the same sense of principle that you were able to muster when I first ran for office. As I look out this room, just like John, there are a lot of people who invested early in me. And I couldn't be more personally grateful for that. But remember, my slogan back then was not "yes, I can," it was "yes, we can." And I will not be on the ballot ever again, and I'm happy about that. [*Laughter*] Michelle is even happier. But as I said in a speech that I gave just this week—because I had gone back home to Springfield, Illinois, where I had first made my announcement back in 2007 in the State Capitol there, just across the street from where Lincoln had served as a State legislator—just as Brandeis once said, the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. The most important office in democracy is the office of citizen.

And so I won't be on the ballot, but I will still retain this office of citizen and will be right alongside you, working just as hard to make sure that the values we care about and the principles we believe in are vindicated. And I know that we live in a cynical time, and you're seeing in our election cycle right now the expressions of a lot of anger and frustration. Some of it is manufactured for political purposes. Some of it is hype that we see in the news cycle, in the media, in the age of Twitter. But the frustrations are there, and they're real.

And there are people who are afraid because they still remember what happened in 2007, 2008, and they saw their property values of their home plummet or their pensions suddenly vanish, or they lost their job and couldn't find another one. And so even if we've recovered, they still feel less secure than they did before that crisis. They watch the evening news and what's happening in Syria and other troubled parts of the world, and it comes home to them and they feel scared. And sometimes, fear, if unaddressed, if not channeled, can result in some pretty ugly politics.

And it has never been more important, then, for us as citizens to fight against that fear. It has never been more important, I believe, to embrace hope and find what we have in

common rather than what divides us than it is right now. And that means that we're going to have to work just as hard to elect a Senate that cares about equal pay and cares about raising the minimum wage and cares about nominating folks to the Supreme Court—or confirming folks to the Supreme Court that will preserve hard-fought gains when it comes to civil rights and equal rights. It means that we're going to have to have a Democrat in the White House after I'm gone to make sure that we continue the progress that we've made all these years.

And because of the forces of fear, it's going to be harder. We're going to have to push back against divisive politics. We're going to have to push back against misinformation. And that's going to require all of you to be engaged and involved and to pull more people in and to think in very hard-headed, but big-hearted ways about how do we make sure our government works for us and for people who are vulnerable and too often don't have a voice. Now, the good news is, I think we're going to succeed. Dr. King once said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." And I believe that; I've seen that in my own life.

We've got interns who rotate through the White House every 6 months, incredible young people. They're full of life, and they're engaged and excited and idealistic. And I usually meet with them at the end of the cycle, and they all raise their hands and want to ask questions. And invariably, there's a question to me about how can I make a difference. Some of them just go ahead and say, "How can I be President?" [*Laughter*] And I say to them, first of all, on the Presidency thing, worry more about what you want to do rather than what you want to be, because people I know who are successful don't start off saying, "I want to hold this office," or "I want to have that fame or fortune," but they're passionate about something, whether it's helping kids learn or making sure that folks who are sick have care or making sure that we have a great environment. And then, if you're passionate enough, and you follow that dream, who knows where that might take you. So that's the little advice I give the young people about their career track.

But what I also say to them is, for all the challenges we face right now, if you had to choose one moment in world history in which to be born, and you didn't know ahead of time who you were going to be—whether you were going to be Black or White, gay or straight, American or Chinese or Cambodian—if you didn't know, you'd choose now. You'd choose now because, for all our challenges, the arc of the moral universe has bent towards justice. And America is a better place, for more people, than it was. That's not inevitable. It's not preordained. It is because there are people throughout our history who said, this is the right thing to do and I'm willing to work for it—and have been willing to work for it even if it takes a decade, even if it takes two decades, even if the fruits of their labors aren't realized until after they're long gone. That's why I ended up being the President of the United States. That's why so many of you have been successful. We stand on the shoulders of folks who labored.

So my main message tonight, to all of you—because you know the issues, you know what matters. This is a well-informed crowd. My main message to you has less to do with a particular policy position or why this election is important or what's at stake. It has more to do with a broader general sense of your obligations to continue to pull on that arc and bend it towards justice. You have to not only accept that responsibility, but you have to do so joyfully, because that's what makes America great. People who love this country can change it. We've proven that over the last seven years. We've proven that throughout history. Let's go prove it again.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. Appreciate you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:29 p.m. at the residence of Danny Rose and Aaron D. Rosenberg. In his remarks, he referred to Gabriel F. Rose-Rosenberg, son of Mr. Rose and Mr. Rosenberg; and musician John Legend and his wife Chrissy Teigen. He also referred

to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 12. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic Hope Fund Dinner in Los Angeles
February 11, 2016

Well, let me begin by thanking Sam and Leah. I've come to a lot of events in California, and all across the country, and I've decided I want to buy this house. [*Laughter*] Now, I don't have the mortgage yet, but—[*laughter*]. We are so grateful for your hospitality and your graciousness. And I want to thank everybody who is here. A lot of folks here have been supporters of mine since I was running for the U.S. Senate, not just the Presidency. And to be back with you again and to see how you've stuck with us through thick and thin is something that I'm extremely grateful for.

Because this is a smaller group, I want to spend most of my time in a discussion, take your questions, take your comments, take your advice. Everybody has got advice. [*Laughter*] So I'm not going to speak too long at the top, just to set the stage.

When I came into office, the country was in a bad way. We were losing 800,000 jobs a month. We were on the brink of a Great Depression. Millions of people didn't have health care, despite us being the wealthiest nation on Earth. We were in the midst of two wars. We were not in any serious way addressing climate change. Iran was on the brink of reaching breakout capacity for a nuclear weapon. Our standing around the world was diminished.

And because of your support and the hard work of a lot of people, not just in the administration, but outside of it, the country is indisputably better off now than it was. The economy has recovered. We've taken unemployment from 10 percent down to 4.9 percent. Eighteen million people have health care who didn't have it before. We put in place serious mechanisms to reduce our carbon pollution, and helped to mobilize an international response to climate change. We doubled the production of clean energy and creating good jobs here in America.

On social justice issues from ending "don't ask, don't tell" to helping to usher in an era in which no matter who you are, you can marry who you love, to dealing with our criminal justice system in a smarter way that keeps us safe, but also ensures that people who serve their time are able to reintegrate into society, we have moved the needle forward. And as Sam said, the question now is, how do we sustain that?

The most important thing we can do to sustain that progress is to make sure that we regain the Senate, we move towards regaining seats in the House, and we have a Democratic President. And this is a pretty sophisticated group, so I don't have to tell you what's at stake. Everything from Supreme Court appointments to our ability to sustain our leadership on climate change, to continue to make progress on closing the gap in opportunity for children all across this country—all those things are going to depend on what we do over the next several months.

This is a volatile time in politics because people are anxious. People are anxious from the experiences they had in 2007 and 2008. They're frustrated about long-term trends of inequality and the fact that wages and incomes haven't gone up as fast as, in many cases, corporate profits have. They're worried about disorder in the world and protecting America from groups like ISIL. And sometimes, when people are afraid, politics can take a bad turn.

And it's our job to make sure that we tap into those best impulses of the American people, and we bring people together instead of dividing them, and we are tough and principled about the things that we believe in, but we also set a tone that ensures that this greatest democracy on Earth continues for our children and our grandchildren.

So I want to thank you for what you've done, but more importantly, I'm going to thank you in advance for what you are going to do. Because I need you to feel just as much urgency about this election as any election that I've been involved with. I will not be on any ballot ever again. [*Laughter*] And I think that's something I'm pleased with, but not as pleased as Michelle is. [*Laughter*] But as I was saying in my remarks earlier today, that Justice Brandeis once said the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. And that office I will retain, alongside you.

And our job is to work as hard as we can to make sure that we fulfill our responsibilities. If we do, then I'm confident that we'll get the kind of government and kind of politics that we deserve and the next generation deserves.

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:38 p.m. at the residence of Samuel N. and Leah S. Fisher. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 12. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
February 13, 2016

Hi, everybody. I'm speaking to you today from Springfield, Illinois. I spent 8 years in the State senate here. It was a place where, for all of our surface differences in a State as diverse as Illinois, my colleagues and I actually shared a lot in common. We fought for our principles, we voted against each other, but because we assumed the best in one another and not the worst, we found room for progress. We bridged differences to get things done.

In my travels through this State, I saw most Americans do the same. Folks know that issues are complicated and that people with different ideas might have a point. It convinced me that if we just approached our politics the same way we approach our daily lives—with common sense, a commitment to fairness, and the belief that we're all in this together—then there's nothing that we cannot do.

That's why I announced right here in Springfield that I was running for President. And my faith in the generosity and fundamental goodness of the American people is rewarded and affirmed every single day.

But I'll be the first to admit that the tone of our politics hasn't gotten better, but worse. Too many people feel like the system is rigged and their voices don't matter. And when good people are pushed away from participating in our public life, more powerful and extreme voices will fill the void. They'll be the ones who gain control over decisions that could send a young soldier to war or allow another economic crisis or roll back the rights that generations of Americans have fought to secure.

The good news is, there's also a lot we can do about this, from reducing the influence of money in our politics to changing the way we draw congressional districts, to simply changing the way we treat each other. That's what I came back here to talk about this week. And I hope you check out my full speech at whitehouse.gov.

One thing I focused on, for example, was how we can make voting easier, not harder, and modernize it for the way we live now. Here in Illinois, a new law allows citizens to register and vote at the polls on election day. It also expands early voting, which makes it much easier for working folks and busy parents. We're also considering automatic voter registration for every citizen when they apply for a driver's license. And I'm calling on more States to adopt steps like these. Because when more of us vote, the less captive our politics will be to narrow interests and the better our democracy will be for our children.

Nine years after I first announced for this office, I still believe in a politics of hope. And for all the challenges of a changing world, for

all the imperfections of our democracy, choosing a politics of hope is something that's entirely up to each of us.

Thanks, everybody.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:15 p.m. on February 10 in the senate chamber at the Illinois State Capitol in Springfield, IL, for broadcast on February 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 12, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 13. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on the Death of Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin G. Scalia in Rancho Mirage, California

February 13, 2016

Good evening, everybody. For almost 30 years, Justice Antonin "Nino" Scalia was a larger-than-life presence on the Bench: a brilliant legal mind with an energetic style, incisive wit, and colorful opinions.

He influenced a generation of judges, lawyers, and students and profoundly shaped the legal landscape. He will no doubt be remembered as one of the most consequential judges and thinkers to serve on the Supreme Court. Justice Scalia dedicated his life to the cornerstone of our democracy: the rule of law. Tonight we honor his extraordinary service to our Nation and remember one of the towering legal figures of our time.

Antonin Scalia was born in Trenton, New Jersey, to an Italian immigrant family. After graduating from Georgetown University and Harvard Law School, he worked at a law firm and taught law before entering a life of public service. He rose from Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Counsel to the judge on the DC Circuit Court to Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.

A devout Catholic, he was the proud father of nine children and grandfather to many loving grandchildren. Justice Scalia was both an avid hunter and an opera lover, a passion for music that he shared with his dear colleague and friend, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg. Michelle and I were proud to welcome him to the White House, including in 2012 for a state dinner for Prime Minister David Cameron. And tonight we join his fellow Justices in mourning this remarkable man.

Obviously, today is a time to remember Justice Scalia's legacy. I plan to fulfill my constitutional responsibilities to nominate a successor in due time. There will be plenty of time for me to do so and for the Senate to fulfill its responsibility to give that person a fair hearing and a timely vote. These are responsibilities that I take seriously, as should everyone. They're bigger than any one party. They are about our democracy. They're about the institution to which Justice Scalia dedicated his professional life and making sure it continues to function as the beacon of justice that our Founders envisioned.

But at this moment, we most of all want to think about his family, and Michelle and I join the Nation in sending our deepest sympathies to Justice Scalia's wife Maureen and their loving family, a beautiful symbol of a life well lived. We thank them for sharing Justice Scalia with our country.

God bless them all, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:45 p.m. in the press file at the Omni Rancho Las Palmas Resort and Spa. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom. The related proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the Opening Session of the United States-Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit Meeting in Rancho Mirage, California
February 15, 2016

Well, good afternoon, everyone. It is my privilege to welcome you to this landmark gathering, the first U.S.-ASEAN summit hosted by the United States. This reflects my personal commitment, and the national commitment of the United States, to a strong and enduring partnership with your 10 nations individually and to Southeast Asia as one region, as one community, ASEAN.

I want to thank my cochair, President Choummali of Laos, Secretary-General Minh, and leaders from all 10 ASEAN nations for being here.

As everyone knows, I first came to know the people and the beauty and the strength of Southeast Asia as a boy when I lived in Indonesia for several years with my mother. As President, I've had the opportunity to visit most of your countries. You and the people of ASEAN have always shown me extraordinary hospitality, and I hope we can reciprocate with the warmth today and tomorrow, which is why I did not hold this summit in Washington. It is cold there. It's snowing. So welcome to beautiful, warm Sunnylands. [*Laughter*]

As President, I've insisted that even as the United States confronts urgent threats around the world, our foreign policy also has to seize on new opportunities. And few regions present more opportunity to the 21st century than the Asia-Pacific. That's why, early in my Presidency, I decided that the United States, as a Pacific nation, would rebalance our foreign policy and play a larger and long-term role in the Asia-Pacific. And this has included engagement with Southeast Asia and ASEAN, which is central to the region's peace and prosperity and to our shared goal of building a regional order where all nations play by the same rules.

As part of our deeper engagement, I'm proud to be the first U.S. President to meet with leaders of all 10 ASEAN countries. This summit marks our seventh meeting. At your invitation, the United States joined the East Asia Summit, and together, we've made it the region's leading forum for addressing political and security challenges. I've made now seven visits to the ASEAN region, more than any previous American President. At our last meeting in Kuala Lumpur, we forged a new strategic partnership. And our sustained engagement is delivering concrete results that benefit all of us, momentum that we can build on here at this summit.

Together, we can continue to increase the trade and economic partnerships that create jobs and opportunity for our people. Since I took office, we've boosted trade between the United States and ASEAN by 55 percent. The region is now our fourth largest goods trading partner, including U.S. exports that support more than 500,000 American jobs. U.S companies have been the largest source of foreign investment in ASEAN, one of the many reasons that the region's GDP has surged in recent years, lifting people from poverty into the middle class.

I want to take this opportunity to again congratulate my fellow leaders on the formation of the ASEAN Community, which is another important step toward integrating your economies. Here at this summit, we can build on this progress and do more to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation so that growth and development is sustainable and inclusive and benefits all people.

Together, we can also continue to increase our security cooperation to meet shared challenges. In recent years, the United States has increased our maritime security assistance to our allies and partners in the region, improving our mutual capabilities to protect lawful commerce and to respond to humanitarian crisis. Here at this summit, we can advance our shared vision of a regional order where international rules and norms, including freedom of navigation, are upheld and where disputes are resolved through peaceful, legal means.

Together, we can continue to support the aspirations and dignity of our citizens. The his-

toric a election in Myanmar and the transition now underway gives hope for a nation that is inclusive, united, peaceful, and democratic. In joining the TPP, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei have committed to high labor and environmental standards.

I'm very proud that our Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative is helping to empower young men and women who are shaping the region every day. As you know, I've held a number of town hall meetings with these remarkable young people. And their idealism, their courage, their willingness to work for the future that they believe in should all give us hope. As leaders, we have to answer their aspirations. And here at the summit, we can reaffirm that strong, prosperous and inclusive societies require good governance, rule of law, accountable institutions, vibrant civil societies, and upholding human rights.

Finally, together, we can continue to do more around the world to meet transnational challenges that no one nation can meet alone. As we were reminded again by the attack in Jakarta last month, the scourge of terrorism demands that we stay vigilant, share more information, and work cooperatively to protect our people. Just as our nations worked together to achieve a strong climate change agreement in Paris, now we need to implement that agreement and step up investment in clean, affordable energy, including for developing countries.

So economic growth that is inclusive, creating opportunities for all; mutual security and the peaceful resolution of disputes; human dignity, including respect for human rights and development that is sustainable—that is our vision. And that's what brings us here together today.

I want to thank all of my fellow leaders for being here and for your commitment to a strong U.S.-ASEAN partnership. And given the extraordinary progress that we've achieved together these past 7 years, I'm confident that we can continue our momentum at this summit.

With that, I want to invite President Choummali to say a few words as well. Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:47 p.m. in the Sunnylands Center at the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands.

The President's News Conference in Rancho Mirage
February 16, 2016

The President. Good afternoon, everyone. Let me begin by thanking the Annenberg Foundation Trust and everyone here at beautiful Sunnylands and the people of Rancho Mirage for their incredible hospitality these past 2 days. I have hosted foreign leaders here before. It's quite another to host leaders from 10 nations at the same time. And I want to thank everybody who helped make the summit such a success.

For 50 years, leaders and people across Southeast Asia have worked together through ASEAN to advance their mutual security, prosperity, and dignity. For decades, the United States has been a proud partner with ASEAN. And this summit has built on the unprecedented cooperation we've forged over the past 7 years, as I described yesterday. This spirit—working together on behalf of mutual interests, in mutual respect—guided our work over the past 2 days. And so I especially want to thank my fellow leaders from the ASEAN countries for being here, for their commitment, and for the progress that we've made together.

One of my main messages over the past 2 days has been the commitment of the United States to ASEAN and its people. That commitment is and will remain strong and enduring. With our strategic partnership, we have a framework to guide our ties for decades to come.

Here at Sunnylands, we agreed to a number of key principles, including the principle that ASEAN will continue to be central—in fact, indispensable—to peace, prosperity, and progress in the Asia-Pacific. With—when ASEAN

speaks with a clear, unified voice, it can help advance security, opportunity, and human dignity, not only for the more than 600 million people across ASEAN, but for people across the Asia-Pacific and around the world. And I'm pleased that, here at this summit, ASEAN's strong voice allowed us to make progress on multiple fronts.

First, we agreed to do more together to encourage the entrepreneurship and innovation that are at the heart of modern, competitive economies. We had an excellent discussion with a number of pioneering business leaders who reiterated the recipe for attracting trade and investment: rule of law, transparency, protection of intellectual property, efficient customs, modern infrastructure, e-commerce and the free flow of information, support for small and medium-sized businesses, and perhaps most importantly, investment in people: investment in strong schools to educate and train the next generation.

Around the table, there was widespread recognition that this is the path ASEAN countries need to continue on. As they do, it will create even more opportunities for trade and investment between the U.S. and ASEAN countries.

I affirmed our strong support for the ASEAN Community and pledged that the United States will continue to be a partner in ASEAN's efforts to integrate economies and reduce barriers to trade and investment. I'm also announcing a new initiative, U.S.-ASEAN Connect: a network of hubs across the region to better coordinate our economic engagement and connect more of our entrepreneurs, investors, and businesses with each other.

We're also doing more to help aspiring innovators in the region learn English, the international language of business. And I reiterated that the Trans-Pacific Partnership—which includes four ASEAN members—can advance economic integration across ASEAN and set stronger rules for trade throughout the Asia-Pacific. To that end, we've launched a new effort to help all ASEAN countries understand the key elements of TPP, as well as the reforms that could eventually lead to them joining.

Second, with regard to security, the United States and ASEAN are reaffirming our strong commitment to a regional order where international rules and norms—and the rights of all nations, large and small—are upheld. We discussed the need for tangible steps in the South China Sea to lower tensions, including a halt to further reclamation, new construction, and militarization of disputed areas. Freedom of navigation must be upheld and lawful commerce should not be impeded.

I reiterated that the United States will continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows, and we will support the right of all countries to do the same. We will continue to help our allies and partners strengthen their maritime capabilities. And we discussed how any disputes between claimants in the region must be resolved peacefully, through legal means, such as the upcoming arbitration ruling under the U.N. Convention of the Law of the Seas, which the parties are obligated to respect and abide by.

Third, I made it clear that the United States will continue to stand with those across Southeast Asia who are working to advance rule of law, good governance, accountable institutions, and the universal human rights of all people. We continue to encourage a return to civilian rule in Thailand. We will sustain our engagement with the people of Myanmar as a new President is selected and as they work to implement the cease-fire agreement and move forward with national reconciliation.

Across the region, we'll continue to stand with citizens and civil society and defend their freedom of speech, of assembly, and of the press. No one, including those in political opposition, should ever be detained or imprisoned simply for speaking their mind. That only stymies progress, only makes it harder for countries to truly thrive and prosper.

And finally, the United States and ASEAN are doing more to deal with transnational challenges together. I offered our assistance to help ASEAN countries better leverage Interpol data to prevent the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. We agree that implementing the Paris climate change agreement—including helping

developing countries adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change—will be critical, and it will enable them to leap ahead to new and affordable clean energy.

As we pursue our sustainable development goals, we're launching a new competition: an innovation challenge to encourage students across ASEAN to develop new solutions to boost agriculture. We're moving ahead with our Global Health Security Agenda to prevent future epidemics, and I pledged additional U.S. assistance to help ASEAN combat the horror of human trafficking.

So to sum up, I believe this summit has put the U.S.-ASEAN partnership on a new trajectory that will carry us to even greater heights in the decades ahead. America's foreign policy rebalance to the Asia-Pacific, including Southeast Asia, will continue to be a foreign policy priority of my Presidency. I look forward to visiting Vietnam for the first time in May and to becoming the first U.S. President to visit Laos when it hosts the East Asia Summit in September.

And I'm confident that whoever the next President may be will build on the foundation that we've laid, because there's strong, sustained, bipartisan support for American engagement in the Asia-Pacific region. And through our Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative, our investment in young people, in their business success, and civil society and grassroots leaders across the region I believe will further bind us together in a spirit of partnership and friendship for many years to come.

So with that, let me take a few questions. And I'm going to start with Darlene Superville of the Associated Press. Where is Darlene? There she is.

Death of Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin G. Scalia/Supreme Court Nomination Process

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My question is about the Supreme Court.

The President. I'm shocked. [*Laughter*]

Q. What recourse do you have if Leader McConnell blocks a vote on your Supreme Court nominee? And do you think that if you choose someone moderate enough that Republicans might change course and schedule a vote? And as you consider that choice and who to nominate, what qualities are important to you, and is diversity among them? Thank you.

The President. First of all, I want to reiterate heartfelt condolences to the Scalia family. Obviously, Justice Scalia and I had different political orientations and probably would have disagreed on the outcome of certain cases. But there's no doubt that he was a giant on the Supreme Court, helped to shape the legal landscape. He was, by all accounts, a good friend and loved his family deeply. And so it's important, before we rush into the all the politics of this, to take stock of somebody who made enormous contributions to the United States. And we are grateful not only for his service, but for his family's service.

The Constitution is pretty clear about what is supposed to happen now. When there is a vacancy on the Supreme Court, the President of the United States is to nominate someone. The Senate is to consider that nomination, and either they disapprove of that nominee or that nominee is elevated to the Supreme Court.

Historically, this has not been viewed as a question. There's no unwritten law that says that it can only be done on off years. That's not in the constitutional text. I'm amused when I hear people who claim to be strict interpreters of the Constitution suddenly reading into it a whole series of provisions that are not there. There is more than enough time for the Senate to consider in a thoughtful way the record of a nominee that I present and to make a decision.

And with respect to our process, we're going to do the same thing that we did with respect to Justice Kagan's nomination and Justice Sotomayor's nomination. We're going to find somebody who is has an outstanding legal mind, somebody whose—who cares deeply about our democracy and cares about rule of law. There's not going to be any particular position on a particular issue that determines whether or not I nominate them, but I'm going to present somebody who indisputably is qualified for the seat and any fairminded person—even somebody who disagreed with my

politics—would say would serve with honor and integrity on the Court.

Now, part of the problem that we have here is, is we've almost gotten accustomed to how obstructionist the Senate has become when it comes to nominations. I mean, I've got 14 nominations that have been pending that were unanimously approved by the Judiciary Committee—so Republicans and Democrats on the Judiciary Committee all agreed that they were well qualified for the position—and yet we can't get a vote on those individuals. So in some ways, this argument is just an extension of what we've seen in the Senate, generally, and not just on judicial nominees.

The basic function of Government requires that the President of the United States, in his or her duties, has a team of people—Cabinet Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries—that can carry out the basic functions of Government. It requires—the Constitution requires that we appoint judges so that they can carry out their functions as a separate branch of Government.

And the fact that we've almost grown accustomed to a situation that is almost unprecedented, where every nomination is contested, everything is blocked regardless of how qualified the person is, even when there's no ideological objection to them, certainly where there's no disqualifying actions by the nominee that have surfaced—the fact that it's that hard, that we're even discussing this, is I think a measure of how, unfortunately, the venom and rancor in Washington has prevented us from getting basic work done. Now, this would be a good moment for us to rise above that.

I understand the stakes. I understand the pressure that Republican Senators are undoubtedly under. I mean, the fact of the matter is, is that what the issue here is, is that the Court is now divided on many issues; this would be a deciding vote. And there are a lot of Republican Senators who are going to be under a lot of pressure from various special interests and various constituencies and many of their voters to not let any nominee go through, no matter who I nominate. But that's not how the system is supposed to work. That's not how our democracy is supposed to work.

And I intend to nominate in due time a very well-qualified candidate. If we are following basic precedent, then that nominee will be presented before the committees, the vote will be taken, and ultimately, they'll be confirmed. Justice Kennedy, when he was nominated by Ronald Reagan, in Ronald Reagan's last year in office, a vote was taken. And there were a whole lot of Democrats who I'm sure did not agree with Justice Kennedy on his position on a variety of issues, but they did the right thing: They confirmed him. And if they voted against him, they certainly didn't mount a filibuster to block a vote from even coming up.

This is the Supreme Court, the highest court in the land. It's the one court where we would expect elected officials to rise above day-to-day politics. And this will be the opportunity for Senators to do their job. Your job doesn't stop until you're voted out or until your term expires. I intend to do my job between now and January 20 of 2017. I expect them to do their job as well.

All right. Let's see who we've got here. Jeff Mason [Reuters].

Supreme Court Nomination Process

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Following up on that, should we interpret your comments just now that you are likely to choose a moderate nominee? Would you——

The President. No. [*Laughter*]

Q. Okay.

The President. I don't know where you found that. You shouldn't assume anything about the qualifications of the nominee other than they're going to be well qualified.

Q. All right.

The President. Okay.

Q. Following up——

The President. Yes.

Q. Would you consider a recess appointment if your nominee is not granted a hearing?

The President. I think that we have more than enough time to go through regular order, regular processes. I intend to nominate somebody, to present them to the American people, to present them to the Senate. I expect them to hold hearings. I expect there to be a vote.

Q. That means no recess appointment?

The President. Full stop.

Q. And lastly, as long as we're doing this in a row, how do you respond to Republican criticism that your position is undercut by the fact that you and other members of your administration who were in the Senate at the time tried to filibuster Judge Alito in 2006?

The President. The—look, I think what's fair to say is that how judicial nominations have evolved over time is not historically the fault of any single party. This has become just one more extension of politics. And there are times where folks are in the Senate and they're thinking, as I just described, primarily about, is this going to cause me problems in a primary? Is this going to cause me problems with supporters of mine? And so people take strategic decisions. I understand that.

But what is also true is, Justice Alito is on the Bench right now. I think that, historically, if you look at it, regardless of what votes particular Senators have taken, there's been a basic consensus, a basic understanding, that the Supreme Court is different. And each caucus may decide who's going to vote where and what, but that basically, you let the vote come up and you make sure that a well-qualified candidate is able to join the Bench, even if you don't particularly agree with them. And my expectation is, is that the same should happen here.

Now, this will be a test—one more test—of whether or not norms, rules, basic fair play can function at all in Washington these days. But I do want to point out, this is not just the Supreme Court. I mean, we have consistently seen just a breakdown in the basic functions of Government because the Senate will not confirm well-qualified nominees even when they're voted out of committee, which means that they're voted by both parties without objection.

And we still have problems, because there's a certain mindset that says, we're just going to grind the system down to a halt, and if we don't like the President, then we're just not going to let him make any appointments. We're going to make it tougher for the administration to do their basic job. We're going to make sure that Ambassadors aren't seated, even though these are critical countries and it may have an effect on our international relations. We're going to make sure that judges aren't confirmed, despite the fact that Justice Roberts, himself, has pointed out, there's emergencies in courts around the country because there are just not enough judges and there are too many cases and the system is breaking down.

So this has become a habit. And it gets worse and worse each year. And it's not something that I have spent a huge amount of time talking about, because, frankly, the American people, on average, they're more interested in gas prices and wages and issues that touch on their day-to-day lives in a more direct way, so it doesn't get a lot of political attention.

But this is the Supreme Court. And it's going to get some attention. And we have to ask ourselves as a society a fundamental question: Is the—are we able to still make this democracy work the way it's supposed to, the way our Founders envisioned it? And I would challenge anyone who purports to be adhering to the original intent of the Founders, anybody who believes in the Constitution, coming up with a plausible rationale as to why they would not even have a hearing for a nominee made in accordance with the Constitution by the President of the United States, with a year left, practically, in office. It's pretty hard to find that in the Constitution.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. All right. You've gotten at least—you've gotten four now, Jeff.

Toluse [Toluse Olorunnipa, Bloomberg News].

Russia/Syria/Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS) Terrorist Organization

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Two different topics, first on Syria.

The President. Yes.

Q. Last year, when President Putin was about to enter into Syria, you said that he was doing so from a position of weakness and that he would only get himself involved in a quagmire there. Now, with Aleppo about to fall, it seems like President Putin is basically getting one of his goals, which is to bolster Asad and to

take out the rebels, which the U.S. is backing. How do you respond to critics who say that you have been outfoxed by Putin? And what is your plan if Aleppo does fall? Do you plan to step up military action to help the rebels in Syria, who you have said are key to taking on ISIS?

And then, secondly, I wanted to ask you about 2016 as well.

The President. Okay, this is getting to be a lot of questions here. How about—you asked me a big question right there. How about I just answer that one?

Q. Okay, sure.

The President. All right. [*Laughter*] The—first of all, what I—if you look back at the transcripts, what I said was that Russia has been propping up Asad this entire time. The fact that Putin finally had to send his own troops and his own aircraft and his—invest this massive military operation was not a testament to a great strength, it was a testament to the weakness of Asad's position; that if somebody is strong, then you don't have to send in your army to prop up your ally: They have legitimacy in their country, and they are able to manage it their self, and then you have good relations with them. You send in your army when the horse you're backing isn't effective. And that's exactly what's happened.

Now, what I said was, is that Russia would involve itself in a quagmire. Absolutely, it will. If there's anybody who thinks that somehow the fighting ends because Russia and the regime has made some initial advances, about three-quarters of the country is still under control of folks other than Asad. That's not stopping anytime soon.

So I say that, by the way, with no pleasure. This is not a contest between me and Putin. The question is, how can we stop the suffering, stabilize the region, stop this massive outmigration of refugees who are having such a terrible time, end the violence, stop the bombing of schools and hospitals and innocent civilians, stop creating a safe haven for ISIS? And there's nothing that's happened over the last several weeks that points to those issues being solved. And that is what I mean by a quagmire.

Now, Putin may think that he's prepared to invest in a permanent occupation of Syria with Russian military. That's going to be pretty costly. That's going to be a big piece of business. And if you look at the state of the Russian economy, that's probably not the best thing for Russia.

What would be smarter would be for Russia to work with the United States and other parties in the international community to try to broker some sort of political transition. Now, John Kerry, working with his Russian counterpart, has, on paper, said that there's going to be a cessation of hostilities in a few days. This will test whether or not that's possible. It's hard to do because there's been a lot of bloodshed. And if Russia continues indiscriminate bombing of the sort that we've been seeing, I think it's fair to say that you're not going to see any take-up by the opposition.

And yes, Russia is a major military. Obviously, a bunch of rebels are not going to be able to compete with the hardware of the second most powerful military in the world. But that doesn't solve the problem of actually stabilizing Syria. And the only way to do that is to bring about some sort of political transition.

We will see what happens over the next several days. And we will continue to work with our partners who are focused on defeating ISIS to also see how we can work together to try to bring about a more lasting political solution than aerial bombardment of schools and hospitals are going to achieve.

But it's hard. I'm under no illusions here that this is going to be easy. A country has been shattered because Asad was willing to shatter it and has repeatedly missed opportunities to try to arrive at a political transition. And Russia has been party to that entire process. And the real question we should be asking is, what is it that Russia thinks it gains if it gets a country that's been completely destroyed as an ally that it now has to perpetually spend billions of dollars to prop up? That's not that great a prize. Unfortunately, the problem is, is that it has spillover effects that have—are impacting everybody, and that's what we have to focus on.

One thing that I do want to add though: This has not distracted us from continuing to focus on ISIL. And we continue to press them hard both in Iraq and Syria. That will not stop. And if we can get a political transition in Syria, that allows us to coordinate more effectively with not just Russia, but other countries in the region to focus on the folks who pose the greatest direct threat to the United States.

All right. Andrew Beatty [Agence France-Presse].

Libya/Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS) Terrorist Organization

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I wanted to ask you, first of all, whether you think that military intervention will be necessary in Libya to dislodge the Islamic State from Sirte? And as an extension of that, do you think that by the end of your Presidency, the Islamic State will still have geographical strongholds throughout the Middle East? And, I'm sorry, I can't resist asking a third: How was the stadium course? What did you shoot? [*Laughter*]

The President. The last, for nongolfers, is a reference to PGA West. Very nice course, very difficult. My score is classified. [*Laughter*]

With respect to Libya, I have been clear from the outset that we will go after ISIS wherever it appears, the same way that we went after Al Qaida wherever they appeared. And the testament to the fact that we are doing that already is that we took out ISIS—one of ISIS's most prominent leaders in Libya.

We will continue to take actions where we've got a clear operation and a clear target in mind. And we are working with our other coalition partners to make sure that as we see opportunities to prevent ISIS from digging in, in Libya, we take them. At the same time, we're working diligently with the United Nations to try to get a Government in place in Libya. And that's been a problem.

The tragedy of Libya over the last several years is, Libya has a relatively small population and a lot of oil wealth and could be really successful. They are divided by tribal lines and ethnic lines, power plays. There is now, I think, a recognition on the part of a broad middle among their political leadership that it makes sense to unify so that there is just some semblance of a state there, but extremes on either side are still making it difficult for that state to cohere.

If we can get that done, that will be enormously helpful, because our strong preference, as has always been the case, is to train Libyans to fight. And the good news in Libya is, is that they don't like outsiders coming in, telling them what to do. There's a whole bunch of constituencies who are hardened fighters and don't ascribe to ISIS or their perverted ideology. But they have to be organized and can't be fighting each other. And so that's probably as important as anything that we're going to be doing in Libya over the coming months.

Carol Lee [Wall Street Journal].

2016 Presidential Election

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. The Democratic race to replace you has gotten pretty heated lately, and you have Hillary Clinton saying that—or at least casting herself as the rightful heir to your legacy and the one, the candidate, who will be the keeper of your legacy, while also saying the Bernie Sanders has been disloyal to you. Is she right?

The President. Well, that's the great thing about primaries, is everybody is trying to differentiate themselves, when, in fact, Bernie and Hillary agree on a lot of stuff and disagree pretty much across the board with everything the Republicans stand for. So my hope is, is that we can let the primary voters and caucus goers have their say for a while, and let's see how this thing plays itself out.

I know Hillary better than I know Bernie because she served in my administration and she was an outstanding Secretary of State. And I suspect that on certain issues she agrees with me more than Bernie does. On the other hand, there may be a couple issues where Bernie agrees with me more. I don't know. I haven't studied their positions that closely.

Here's what I have confidence in: that Democratic voters believe in certain principles. They believe in equal opportunity. They believe in making sure that every kid in this

country gets a fair shot. They believe in making sure that economic growth is broad based and everybody benefits from it and if you work hard you're not in poverty. They believe in preserving a strong safety net through programs like Social Security and Medicare. They believe in a foreign policy that is not reckless, that is tough and protects the American people, but doesn't shoot before it aims. They believe in climate change. They think science matters. They think that it's important for us to have some basic regulations to keep our air clean and our water clean and to make sure that banks aren't engaging in excesses that can result in the kind of thing that we saw in 2007 and 2008. So there's a broad convergence of interests around those issues.

I think what you're seeing among Democrats right now is a difference in tactics, trying to figure out how do you actually get things done; how do you actually operate in a political environment that's become so polarized; how do you deal with the power of special interests; and frankly, how do you deal with a Republican Party right now that has moved so far to the right that it's often hard to find common ground.

And so that's, I think, the debate that's taking place right now. It's a healthy debate. Ultimately, I will probably have an opinion on it, based on both being a candidate of hope and change and a President who's got some nicks and cuts and bruises from getting stuff done over the last 7 years. But for now, I think it's important for Democratic voters to express themselves and for the candidates to be run through the paces.

I—he thing I can say unequivocally, Carol, is I'm not unhappy that I am not on the ballot. [*Laughter*]

Q. It sounds like you are willing to give an endorsement.

The President. Ron Allen, NBC. [*Laughter*]

2016 Presidential Election

Q. Let me continue the 2016 questions. On the Republican side—and a lot of your guests were probably very intrigued by the fact that there's a candidate who's still winning who's called for a ban on Muslims, and significant segments of the population in America agree——

The President. "Intrigued" is an interesting way of putting it.

Q. Struck—well, what was their reaction? That's one of my five questions. [*Laughter*] But the point is——

The President. Ron, let's stick to two.

Q. The point is, in the past, you've explained that as anger, resentment, insecurity—economic insecurity.

The question is, how much responsibility do you accept for that reservoir of feeling in the country that's propelling that sort of candidate? And a couple weeks ago, you told Matt Lauer that Donald Trump would not win the Presidency. Do you now think that he will not win the nomination as well? And what about Rubio, and what about Cruz?

The President. I think foreign observers are troubled by some of the rhetoric that's been taking place in these Republican primaries and Republican debates. I don't think it's restricted, by the way, to Mr. Trump. I mean, I find it interesting that everybody is focused on Trump, primarily just because he says in more interesting ways what the other candidates are saying as well.

So he may up the ante in anti-Muslim sentiment, but if you look at what the other Republican candidates have said, that's pretty troubling too. He may express strong, anti-immigration sentiment, but you've heard that from the other candidates as well. You've got a candidate who sponsored a bill—that I supported—to finally solve the immigration problem, and he's running away from it as fast as he can.

They're all denying climate change. I think that's troubling to the international community, since the science is unequivocal. And the other countries around the world, they kind of count on the United States being on the side of science and reason and common sense, because they know that if the United States does not act on big problems in smart ways, nobody will.

But this is not just Mr. Trump. Look at the statements that are being made by the other candidates. There is not a single candidate in

the Republican primary that thinks we should do anything about climate change, that thinks it's serious. Well, that's a problem. The rest of the world looks at that, and they—says, how can that be?

I'll leave it to you to speculate on how this whole race is going to go. I continue to believe Mr. Trump will not be President. And the reason is because I have a lot of faith in the American people, and I think they recognize that being President is a serious job. It's not hosting a talk show or a reality show. It's not promotion. It's not marketing.

It's hard. And a lot of people count on us getting it right. And it's not a matter of pandering and doing whatever will get you in the news on a given day. And sometimes, it requires you making hard decisions even when people don't like it and doing things that are unpopular and standing up for people who are vulnerable, but don't have some powerful political constituency. And it requires being able to work with leaders around the world in a way that reflects the importance of the office and gives people confidence that you know the facts and you know their names and you know where they are on a map and you know something about their history. And you're not just going to play to the crowd back home—because they have their own crowds back home—and you're trying to solve problems.

And so, yes, during primaries, people vent, and they express themselves. And it seems like entertainment, and oftentimes, it's reported just like entertainment. But as you get closer, reality has a way of intruding.

And these are the folks who I have faith in, because they ultimately are going to say, whoever is standing where I'm standing right now has the nuclear codes with them and can order 21-year-olds into a firefight and have to make sure that the banking system doesn't collapse and is often responsible for not just the United States of America, but 20 other countries that are having big problems or falling apart and are going to be looking for us to do something. And the American people are pretty sensible, and I think they'll make a sensible choice in the end.

All right? Thanks, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1:52 p.m. in the Sunnylands Center at the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov of Russia; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; Noureddine Chouchane, a senior Tunisian operative who was killed in a U.S. airstrike targeting ISIL training facilities in Sabratha, Libya, on February 19; Sen. Bernard Sanders; Donald J. Trump, chairman and chief executive officer, Trump Organization; and Sen. Marco A. Rubio, cosponsor of S. 744, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act, which was passed by the Senate on June 27, 2013, but failed in the House of Representatives. A reporter referred to Matt Lauer, coanchor, NBC's "Today" program; and Sen. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate.

Joint Statement of the United States-Association of Southeast Asian Nations Special Leaders Summit—Sunnylands Declaration
February 16, 2016

Sunnylands, California
February 15–16, 2016

We the Heads of State/Government of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United States of America gathered in Sunnylands, California, on February 15–16, 2016, for a Special Leaders Summit. This Special U.S.-ASEAN Leaders Summit was the first ever to be held in the United States and the very first Summit following the establishment of the ASEAN Community.

The Summit marked a watershed year for both ASEAN and for the increasingly close U.S-ASEAN. strategic partnership. In 2015, ASEAN Member States celebrated the establishment of the ASEAN Community, working together toward an ASEAN that better serves the people of Southeast Asia.

At our Summit in Kuala Lumpur in November 2015, we elevated the U.S.-ASEAN relationship to a strategic partnership, recognizing the transformation of our relationship over the past several years. On the occasion of this Special Summit, we the Heads of State/Government of the Member States of ASEAN and the United States of America take this opportunity to reaffirm the key principles that will guide our cooperation going forward:

1. Mutual respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, equality and political independence of all nations by firmly upholding the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, the ASEAN Charter and international law;

2. The importance of shared prosperity, sustainable, inclusive economic growth and development, and the nurturing of our young people to sustain continued peace, development, and stability for mutual benefit;

3. Mutual recognition of the importance of pursuing policies that lead to dynamic, open, and competitive economies that foster economic growth, job creation, innovation, entrepreneurship and connectivity, and that support SMEs and narrow the development gap;

4. Our commitment to ensure opportunities for all of our peoples, through strengthening democracy, enhancing good governance and adherence to the rule of law, promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, encouraging the promotion of tolerance and moderation, and protecting the environment;

5. Respect and support for ASEAN Centrality and ASEAN-led mechanisms in the evolving regional architecture of the Asia-Pacific;

6. Firm adherence to a rules-based regional and international order that upholds and protects the rights and privileges of all states;

7. Shared commitment to peaceful resolution of disputes, including full respect for legal and diplomatic processes, without resorting to the threat or use of force in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law and the 1982 United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS);

8. Shared commitment to maintain peace, security and stability in the region, ensuring maritime security and safety, including the rights of freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the seas, and unimpeded lawful maritime commerce as described in the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as well as non-militarization and self-restraint in the conduct of activities;

9. Shared commitment to promote cooperation to address common challenges in the maritime domain;

10. Strong resolve to lead on global issues such as terrorism and violent extremism, trafficking in persons, drug trafficking, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, as well as illicit trafficking of wildlife and timber;

11. Shared commitment to addressing climate change and developing a climate-resilient, environmentally sustainable ASEAN, as well as to implement individual countries' nationally determined contributions made under the Paris Climate Agreement;

12. Shared commitment to promote security and stability in cyberspace consistent with norms of responsible state behavior;

13. Support for the advancement of a strong, stable, politically cohesive, economically integrated, socially responsible, people-oriented, people-centered and rules-based ASEAN Community;

14. Shared commitment to strengthen people-to-people connectivity through programs that engage ASEAN and American citizens, particularly young people, and that promote opportunities for all our peoples, particularly the most vulnerable, to fulfil the vision of the ASEAN Community;

15. Shared commitment to promote a global partnership for sustainable development through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Ac-

tion Agenda, to ensure a sustainable, equitable and inclusive society where no one is left behind;

16. Shared commitment to enhance collaboration at international and regional fora, especially at existing ASEAN-led mechanisms; and

17. Shared commitment to continue political dialogue at the Head of State/Government level through our Leaders' attendance at the annual U.S.-ASEAN Summit and the East Asia Summit.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks on the Appointment of Thomas E. Donilon as Chair and Samuel J. Palmisano as Vice Chair of the Commission on Enhancing National Cybersecurity

February 17, 2016

Several weeks ago, I announced a Cybersecurity National Action Plan that addresses what increasingly the American people understand as one of our greatest challenges. The Internet has brought incredible opportunity, incredible wealth. It gives us access to data and information that are enhancing our lives in all sorts of ways. It also means that more and more of our lives are being downloaded, being stored, and as a consequence, are a lot more vulnerable. That's true for the private sector. That's true for individual Americans. That true for Federal, State, and local governments. It's true for our critical infrastructure.

And as I indicated when I announced this national action plan, right now we are not as well organized as we need to be to make sure that we're dealing with all these threats in an effective way. We've made some enormous progress since I came into office, chipping away at the problem, trying to upgrade certain systems, trying to patch over certain security vulnerabilities.

But what I've indicated is, even as we are vigilant and constantly trying to improve the security of systems that we currently have, and even as we set up frameworks for cooperation with the private sector where there are particular vulnerabilities, this is going to be a big agenda, a long-term agenda that is extremely complicated, extremely technical, and is going to require us to overhaul a bunch of legacy systems that are already in place.

And for that reason, part of the Cybersecurity National Action Plan was to put together a bipartisan Commission whose task was not to generate some fat report that collects dust, but in a timely way, focuses on what are the long-term challenges that we face, what are the systems that we need to build, and can set a clear sense of direction for the Federal Government, working in concert with the private sector, State, and local actors for the next 5 years, 10 years, 20 years, so that we can make sure that we get the benefits of the Internet and digitalization and not the dangers and threats.

I am really happy that we have identified two people who I can't think of anybody who would be better in serving in this capacity: a dear friend of mine, my former National Security Advisor, Tom Donilon, who spent a lot of years here in the White House steeped in national security challenges, understands every aspect of our intelligence systems, our national security systems, and has worked at the highest levels of Government; and Sam Palmisano, who is the former CEO of IBM. So, as I've joked with him, he knows a little bit about computers. But he has also served in a variety of nonprofit and advisory boards, thinking very deeply about the issue of how do we make cybersecurity a top priority and how do we do better by the American people.

So with a Chairman who understands Government and national security issues, a Vice Chairman from the private sector who understands the intimacies of computing, of the digital world, the economic aspects of this, I think we've got two of the best possible people to chair this—to head up this effort.

We're also going to make sure that some of our key Cabinet Secretaries like Jeh Johnson, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Penny Pritzker, our Secretary of Commerce, and others are working very closely with this Commission. And we're going to be announcing additional names from academia, the private sector, and the national security sector who can add to this effort.

Their goal is going to be to produce a report no later than December 1 that will advise not just me, but the next administration, and potentially administrations after that, in terms of how we deal with this problem. And the scope of their work is broad. They're going to be thinking about everything from how do we keep the huge databases that exist in the Federal Government more secure, to how do we more effectively work with critical sectors of our economy, whether it's the financial sector or our critical infrastructure, like utilities, to make sure their systems are more secure; how do we provide the general public timely and continuously updated information about the best practices they need to keep their families safe, keep their finances safe, keep their health information private; how are we going to improve the process that we purchase IT software and hardware that makes the Government run so that it's not as vulnerable to hacking and attacks; how do we make sure that we attract the very best personnel to work on these issues.

So there's going to be a wide range of issues that these guys are charged with. I have told them that they're going to have the full support of the White House and the Federal Government in moving this effort forward. But there was a poll just in the last few days showing that the American people understand that this is a problem, identified this as, I think, the third highest threat to their well-being and their safety and prosperity. And it's only going to grow.

So we're very excited about Tom and Sam's participation. We're confident that this is going to be the kind of product that is of great importance to everybody. And this is not an ideological issue that should divide Washington along party lines. This is something that everybody has got an interest in getting right. And I want to just thank them for the outstanding work they do. And I'm looking forward to getting a work plan for the United States of America to make sure that we're getting this right. Okay.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:23 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks Honoring the 2015 Stanley Cup Champion Chicago Blackhawks
February 18, 2016

The President. Thank you, everybody! Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. Have a seat. For the fourth—for the third time, as President—[*laughter*]—I was getting ahead of myself, I almost said, fourth—[*laughter*]—I get to say: Give it up for the Stanley Cup champs, my hometown Chicago Blackhawks! Yes!

Now, it is always fun to have the Stanley Cup here. It truly is the best trophy in sports. I'll admit, I was hoping you'd give me a day with it this time around, where I could just—[*laughter*]. Before I was President, I just want to point out, you, the Blackhawks, had gone almost half a century without seeing this thing. [*Laughter*] Now you've got the hat trick. So I think it's pretty clear the kind of luck I've brought to this team. [*Laughter*]

And by the way, we've got a state dinner with Canada coming up, so we may just leave it right in the middle of the room. [*Laughter*] We'll see. Just to gloat a little bit. [*Applause*] Just to gloat a little bit.

We've got a lot of Hawks fans in the house today, including Congressman from Chicago Mike Quigley, who still plays, by the way, still plays hockey. I want to congratulate NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly. We've got Blackhawks owner Rocky Wirtz, and we have President and CEO John McDonough. Give them a big round of applause. Obviously, a team doesn't win this often unless you've got a

great front office and folks who've built a great culture.

We also have to give a big round of applause for a man who just moved into second place on the NHL's alltime wins list, and that is the coach, Joel Quenneville. Coach! So between Coach Q, Coach Ditka, Ozzie Guillén, Phil Jackson, it appears the secret for any coach hoping to bring a title to Chicago is to grow out your mustache. [*Laughter*] Ozzie had a goatee when the White Sox won in '05. But that's close enough. [*Laughter*]

Now, this year's title was a little different. For the first time in 77 years, the Blackhawks won the title in Chicago, on home ice, in front of their fans. It was the high-water mark for a team that's been in the midst of one of the most dominant stretches in all of sports: three titles in 6 years.

[*At this point, a baby cooed.*]

The President. Yes, it is worth cheering for. [*Laughter*] I've got a young fan right there. Eating a hockey puck. [*Laughter*]

The conference—three titles in 6 years. Conference finalists in 5 out of 7 years. One of the best records in hockey this year as well. Each year, that target on their back grows a little bit bigger. Each year, the salary cap makes it a little tougher to keep this group together. But each year, the Hawks keep on winning. It is, as I said, a tribute to the front office. It is also, by the way, a tribute to the head of scouting, who just told me that he could help me pick my Supreme Court Justice. [*Laughter*] Where is he? Yes. [*Laughter*] He volunteered. He said, "I know what I'm doing."

Of course, most of all, it's a tribute to the guys on the ice. You all know the big names on this team: seven players who were here for all three titles, the guys you've heard me talk about twice before. So today I want to actually give the spotlight to two of the unsung heroes on this team. And they're the kind of guys behind the scenes on every winning team, in sports and beyond.

First, there is Kimmo Timonen. Now, Kimmo already had a great career before last season, had been to the Stanley Cup finals, Olympic final, World Championship final. He had lost them all. Just telling the truth. [*Laughter*]

Defenseman Kimmo Timonen. Thank you, thank you. [*Laughter*]

The President. In August, he was diagnosed with blood clots in his lungs and his calf, wasn't even sure he'd play again. He's traded to Chicago midseason, fought back on the ice. His final NHL game, at the age of 40, Kimmo finally hoisted the Cup. And that—first of all, as an old guy, it makes me feel good. [*Laughter*] But it's also a sign of a great career and somebody who's just able to stick with it and consistently contribute and make a huge difference and—so give Kimmo a big round of applause.

Then we've got backup goalie, Scott Darling, who—go ahead and wave, Scott. So Scott grew up idolizing the legendary Blackhawks goalie Eddie Belfour; came up big in the playoffs against Nashville. But I want to highlight something he did just a couple weeks ago, when this team was on a road trip in Arizona: struck up a conversation with a man down on his luck. Scott, I suspect, recognized some of his own struggles in the past, thought he might be able to help. He sent him up—he set him up in a hotel room, paid the bill for a month, hoping that that would be enough time for the man to get back on his feet.

Scott didn't tell anybody about this, except for his new fiancée. But a couple days later, the story went viral. Apparently, an Uber driver told the story to a beer league hockey player. I'd never heard of beer league hockey—[*laughter*]—but it sounds like fun. [*Laughter*] And that player posted it online.

And I couldn't have more respect for Scott's modesty, but now that it's out there, I think it's the kind of good deed that bears repeating. A champion reached out to help somebody who could use a hand—even though he didn't have to, even though nobody was looking, even though he wasn't asking anybody for credit. I like to think that's—reflects something about our city, about Chicago. It's a very American thing to do. And so, Scott, I just want to say thank you for—[*applause*].

And I think this is reflective of a lot of great work that the Blackhawks are doing as well.

Last season, they raised more than $2 million for nonprofits that work with local kids and their families. They're supporting health and wellness, education, and housing initiatives. They brought a few wounded warriors who were patients at Walter Reed here today to say thank you for their outstanding service to our country. They're building a new practice facility, but they're not just keeping it all to themselves. They're opening it up to the community, including inner-city kids who might not otherwise get a chance to skate.

So thank you for the good work that you are doing as an organization on and off the ice. We are all excited for Chicago to host next year's NHL draft. Good luck. [*Laughter*] Congratulations on your third title. It would be nice to have—just squeeze one more in there—[*laughter*]—before I leave. [*Laughter*] Because then, I definitely will take credit for this amazing championship run. I haven't given up hope on the Bulls or the White Sox or the Bears or, heck, I'd even take the Cubs. [*Laughter*] But, in the meantime, let's give it up again for the Chicago Blackhawks!

Head Coach Joel Quenneville. Well, thank you, Mr. President. It's an honor for the Chicago Blackhawks to be invited back to the White House, as you said, three times in six seasons. And like winning the Stanley Cup, we can assure you that the entire organization, beginning with these incredible athletes that you talked about, will never take this for granted.

We're pleased to present you today with a jersey representing three championships, which is over there; the painting, which was in the other room, of the same; and a replica of Lord Stanley, which you might want to put in some library sometime. [*Laughter*]

But we also want you to know, as you might be even spending, as you said, a little more time away from the White House in years to come, and so while you're driving yourself around Chicago, we thought that we might want to present you with something that is near and dear to our house—heart, and that's a parking pass for United Center. [*Laughter*]

The President. This is good. Huge.

Coach Quenneville. It's not only good for Blackhawk games, it's for any event at the United Center for you and your family. [*Laughter*] So, on behalf of the organization, thank you very, very much.

The President. Thank you! Can I just say, this is the best gift I've ever gotten at the White House? This is really cool. Now I'd—you'd pay for this, wouldn't you? Absolutely. [*Laughter*] Quigley, I might sell this on eBay. [*Laughter*]

All right. Thank you. Come on, let's knock this down so we can get a good picture. Come on down. Oh, wait, wait, wait, it looks like I've got one more thing coming. Hold on, hold on. This is important.

Blackhawks President John McDonough. As you said the last time we were here, Mr. President, you said, "It looks bigger on TV." [*Laughter*]

[*The President was presented with a miniature Stanley Cup.*]

The President. The—I did. This is almost as cool as the version that pops popcorn, that I also still have. [*Laughter*] And it's high-quality popcorn, I want you to know. So—and the jersey.

Mr. McDonough. Over here.

The President. Okay. That's a good look right there. Look at that.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Michael K. Ditka, former head coach, National Football League's Chicago Bears; Ozzie Guillén, former manager, Major League Baseball's Chicago White Sox; Phillip D. Jackson, former head coach, National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls; Mark Bernard, director of hockey administration and general manager of minor league affiliations, Chicago Blackhawks; Martha Buckley, fiancée of goalie Scott Darling; and St. Louis, MO–area recreational hockey player Keith Van Gels.

Remarks Following a Meeting With African American Faith and Civil Rights Leaders

February 18, 2016

Well, as we commemorate Black History Month, we've got some history makers around the table here today. Some are legends, like Congressman Lewis and Reverend C.T. Vivian. I would not be here were it not for the battles that they fought a generation ago.

But we've also got some young people here who are making history as we speak. People like Brittany, who served on our Police Task Force in the wake of Ferguson and has led many of the protests that took place there and shined a light on the injustice that was happening. People like DeRay Mckesson, who has done some outstanding work mobilizing in Baltimore around these issues. And to see generations continuing to work on behalf of justice and equality and economic opportunity is greatly encouraging to me.

And a lot of the discussion here today focused on the possibilities of completing criminal justice reform. We've seen some outstanding bipartisan support, both in the House and the Senate. We want to see if we can get that across the finish line this year. We talked about how we, in addition to the legislative actions that can be—that are taken, how we as an administration can continue to consult with these organizations, local municipalities, sheriffs' offices to implement some of the reforms and recommendations that have already been put forward by the Task Force, but also how we can use our administrative actions to encourage reform.

And Attorney General Loretta Lynch has been all on top of this and has been very focused on how we can make sure that the Justice Department and the FBI are not only identifying areas where there are problems in the equal application of the law, but how the Justice Department and the FBI can be models for how we approach some of these issues.

We also had a chance to talk about education and the ways in which we want to ensure that we break this school-to-prison pipeline and start creating a school-to-college-to-jobs pipeline. It has to start early. It means that we make sure that we have a culture in all of our schools that values diversity, values people from different cultures, that is encouraging teachers to understand how to best approach kids who may not have all the advantages that others do and to nurture them in effective ways.

All of these things require resources, and so we tried to describe for these organizations how our budget is reflective of many of these priorities.

But overall, what I am most encouraged by is the degree of focus and seriousness and constructiveness that exists not only with existing civil rights organizations, but this new generation. They are some serious young people. I told them that they are much better organizers than I was when I was their age, and I am confident that they are going to take America to new heights. My job is just to make sure that I'm listening to them and learning from them a little bit. And hopefully, working together across divides of race and party, we can make sure that we're living up to our highest American ideals. There's no better way for us to celebrate Black History Month. All right?

Thank you so much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:59 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Cordy Tindell "C.T." Vivian, founder, C.T. Vivian Leadership Institute; Brittany Packnett, executive director, Teach For America St. Louis, in her capacity as a member of the President's Task Force on 21st-Century Policing; and civil rights activist and Baltimore, MD, mayoral candidate DeRay Mckesson.

Remarks at an African American History Month Reception
February 18, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Well, it is so good to see all of you. Welcome to the White House.

Audience member. Thank you! [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Hey, Michelle!

The President. Hey! We know it is Black History Month when you hear somebody say, "Hey, Michelle!" [*Laughter*] "Girl! You look so good!" [*Laughter*]

Audience member. You do too!

The First Lady. He's all right. You look good too, baby.

The President. All right. I want to thank everybody who's here this evening, this afternoon. I want to give a special thanks to the Members of Congress and the Congressional Black Caucus who are here tonight. Give them a big round of applause.

For the past 7 years—now, come on, y'all. [*Laughter*] I'm only going to be a second.

The First Lady. It's exciting.

The President. Except for that little guy. He's hungry. [*Laughter*]

For the past 7 years, and in some cases before that, the people in this room have been incredible supporters of me and Michelle. And we could not be more grateful for everything you've done for us, everything you've done for the country. And so I just want to start off by saying thank you. [*Applause*] Yes! Yes!

Now, we gather to celebrate Black History Month, and from our earliest days, Black history has been American history. We're the slaves who carried the stone to build this White House, the soldiers who fought for our Nation's independence, who fought to hold this Union together, who fought for freedom of others around the world. We're the scientists and inventors who helped unleash American innovation. We stand on the shoulders not only of the giants in this room, but also countless, nameless heroes who marched for equality and justice for all of us.

And down through the decades, African American culture has profoundly shaped American culture: in music and art, literature and sports. I want to give a special acknowledgment to my lovely wife, because just last week she hosted a performance of African American women and girls in dance. And we had luminaries like Debbie Allen and Judith Jamison working with the next generation of outstanding young Black dancers. It was, apparently, an incredible event. I was not invited. [*Laughter*] My dance moves did not make the cut. [*Laughter*]

So we are so proud to honor this rich heritage. But Black History Month shouldn't be treated as though it is somehow separate from our collective American history or somehow just boiled down to a compilation of greatest hits from the March on Washington or from some of our sports heroes. There are well-meaning attempts to do that all around us, from classrooms to corporate ad campaigns. But we know that this should be more than just a commemoration of particular events.

It's about the lived, shared experience of all African Americans, high and low, famous and obscure, and how those experiences have shaped and challenged and ultimately strengthened America. It's about taking an unvarnished look at the past so we can create a better future. It's a reminder of where we as a country have been so that we know where we need to go.

That's why earlier today, we hosted an intergenerational roundtable of civil rights leaders to talk about today's efforts to reform our criminal justice system. So we had icons of the civil rights movement that helped get me here, folks like Reverend C.T. Vivian and John Lewis. But they were with up-and-coming change makers like Stephen Green of the NAACP Youth and College Division or Brittany Packnett of Campaign Zero——

Audience member. Yes, Brittany!

The President. ——who—yes—who has done outstanding work as a member of our 21st-Century Police Task Force. And to hear the incredible contributions these young people were making and to see how their courage and tenacity was connected to those who had

lived through Bloody Sunday, it made you optimistic about a future. It was powerful to see the fathers and the mothers of the movement in this constant interaction, understanding that each successive generation has to take the baton and move us forward.

And what's so inspiring about these young people and their generation is that they don't see Black history as a relic; it's not something to study in a book. They don't see themselves as distant from that history; they are participants, making history. It's alive; it's something that we have the power and the responsibility to shape and to wield.

The civil rights movement grew out of church basements and word of mouth and drew strength from freedom songs and the power of young people's examples. And thanks to technology and social media, today's leaders are building a new, inclusive movement that's mobilizing people of all backgrounds to stand up for change, from equal opportunity in education to a smarter criminal justice system, one that's more effective in keeping us safe, but also makes sure that everybody is treated fairly under the law.

So I want to give a special shout-out to young people here today and tell them we want them to continue doing what they're doing.

And that's the thing about our democracy. It takes all of us. It's important that we have responsive elected officials. Supreme Court appointments are important. But ultimately, everything comes down to the constant perseverance, the courage, the tenacity, the vision of citizens like you, making sure not only you exercise your right to vote, but that in between elections you are part of a constant movement in your local communities or at a national level or at an international level to bring about the kind of change from which all of us in this room have benefited because of the labors of somebody who came before us.

America is a nation that is a constant work in progress. That's why we are exceptional. We don't stop. There's a gap—there always will be—between who we are and the "perfect Union," that ideal that we see. But what makes us exceptional, what makes us Americans, is that we fight wars and pass laws and we march and we organize unions and we stage protests, and that gap gets smaller over time. And it's that effort to form a more perfect Union that marks us as a people.

As long as we keep at it, as long as we don't get discouraged, as long as we are out there fighting the good fight not just on 1 day or 1 month, but every single day, and every single month, I have no doubt that we're going to live up to the promise of our founding ideals and that all these young children who are standing in front, no matter who they are or where they come from, they're going to have the opportunity to achieve their dreams.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:51 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Debbie Allen, founder, Debbie Allen Dance Academy; Judith Jamison, artistic director emerita, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; Cordy Tindell "C.T." Vivian, founder, C.T. Vivian Leadership Institute; Stephen A. Green, national director, NAACP Youth and College Division; and Brittany Packnett, executive director, Teach For America St. Louis.

Remarks at a Democratic Governors Association Meeting
February 19, 2016

The President. Well, I want to welcome back the Democratic Governors to the White House. It's wonderful to see you.

Before I get started, a couple of orders of business. First of all, I want to recognize that Governor Hickenlooper of Colorado has had a very good year. [*Laughter*] First, he gets married; then, the Broncos win the Super Bowl. [*Laughter*] Now he gets to spend the weekend with all of you. [*Laughter*] He's got

the trifecta. But congratulations. Congratulations.

I should note that Governor Shumlin also got married. So something is in the water.

Governor Peter E. Shumlin of Vermont. Thank you.

The President. But congratulations to both of you. And you obviously are doing what Joe and I did, which is marrying up. [*Laughter*]

Gov. Shumlin. This is very true, very true.

The President. It is great to see all of you. I'm just going to make some brief remarks at the top because this is designed to be a conversation. I want to thank, first of all, every single one of you for all that you do around the country. As Democrats, we believe that every American should have the opportunity to work for a good wage and benefits, and to be able to advance themselves and their families. And you've helped our businesses create over 14 million new jobs over the past 6 years. You've helped cut the unemployment rate down from 10 percent, down to 4.9 percent.

As the Affordable Care Act has taken effect, nearly 18 million Americans have gained health care coverage. And that's thanks to strong efforts by all of you. And I very much appreciate all of that.

We have been able to work at the ground level on all the issues that people care deeply about. For example, Governor Shumlin is about to sign Vermont's first paid sick days leave law. And we are very proud of him for that.

In Minnesota, Governor Dayton has proposed providing 6 weeks of paid parental leave for State employees. So from raising the minimum wage to expanding early childhood education, to expanding how we provide computer science education to our kids, to helping workers retrain for the jobs of the future, to helping them plan for retirement, your States have been leading the charge for change.

There is one thing in particular I'm going to make a focus this year, and that's protecting everybody's right to vote. As I said when I visited my old State capital of Springfield, Illinois, the job of our democracy is to make it easier, not make it harder for our citizens to be able to vote. And we need to be modernizing voting to reflect the way that people live today.

In Illinois, a new law goes into effect this year that expands early voting, and that's going to allow folks to register and vote on election day. Illinois was following the good lead of the Browns: Governor Kate Brown of Oregon and Governor Jerry Brown in California. Last year, their States became the first States to adopt automatic voter registration. In Oregon alone, they're hoping to register 300,000 voters this year. And so I'd encourage your steps—to take a look at the proposals that they've put forward.

This is about more than just creating economic opportunity, it is about preserving the rights and opportunities of generations of Americans that have fought so hard to secure and broaden our democracy. It's about making democracy as good as it can be. So I just want to urge all of you to make sure that folks aren't being disenfranchised and that they're able to participate in the democracy the way our Founders intended.

And with that, what I'd like to do is to turn it over to Governor Malloy, and then, we're going to just start opening up for questions. But again, thanks for all the work you do. And we're really proud to be partners with you. And my hope is, is that Jerry is getting a lot of phone calls from you because we don't want him just sitting around doing nothing around here. [*Laughter*] And I know as a former mayor, he appreciates the fact that unlike Washington, where sometimes rhetoric and ideology get in the way of getting stuff done, when you're a Governor, people expect you to actually put ideology aside and deliver the goods. And all of you have been doing that. So thank you.

All right, thanks, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:19 p.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Joe Biden; and Gov. Dannel P. Malloy of Connecticut.

The President's Weekly Address
February 20, 2016

Hi, everybody. This week, we made it official: I'm going to Cuba. When Michelle and I go to Havana next month, it will be the first visit of a U.S. President to Cuba in nearly 90 years. And it builds on the decision I made more than a year ago to begin a new chapter in our relationship with the people of Cuba.

You see, I believe that the best way to advance American interests and values and the best way to help the Cuban people improve their lives is through engagement: by normalizing relations between our governments and increasing the contacts between our peoples. I've always said that change won't come to Cuba overnight. But as Cuba opens up, it will mean more opportunity and resources for ordinary Cubans. And we're starting to see some progress.

Today, the American flag flies over our Embassy in Havana and our diplomats are interacting more broadly with the Cuban people. More Americans are visiting Cuba than at any time in the last 50 years—Cuban American families, American students, teachers, humanitarians, volunteers, faith communities—all forging new ties and friendships that are bringing our countries closer. And when direct flights and ferries resume, even more of our citizens will have the chance to travel and work together and know each other.

American companies are starting to do business in Cuba, helping to nurture private enterprise and giving Cuban entrepreneurs new opportunities. With new Wi-Fi hotspots, more Cubans are starting to go online and get information from the outside world. In both our countries, there's overwhelming support for this new relationship. And in Cuba today, for the first time in a half century, there is hope for a different future, especially among Cuba's young people who have such extraordinary talent and potential just waiting to be unleashed.

My visit will be an opportunity to keep moving forward. I'll meet with President Castro to discuss how we can continue normalizing relations, including making it easier to trade and easier for Cubans to access the Internet and start their own businesses. As I did when I met President Castro last year, I'll speak candidly about our serious differences with the Cuban Government, including on democracy and human rights. I'll reaffirm that the United States will continue to stand up for universal values like freedom of speech and assembly and religion.

I'll meet with members of Cuba's civil society, courageous men and women who give voice to the aspirations of the Cuban people. I'll meet with Cuban entrepreneurs to learn how we can help them start new ventures. And I'll speak directly to the Cuban people about the values we share and how I believe we can be partners as they work for the future they want.

We're still in the early days of our new relationship with the Cuban people. This transformation will take time. But I'm focused on the future, and I'm confident that my visit will advance the goals that guide us: promoting American interests and values and a better future for the Cuban people, a future of more freedom and more opportunity.

Thanks, everybody. And to the people of Cuba: *Nos vemos en La Habana.*

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:10 a.m. on February 19 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on February 20. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 19, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 20. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the National Governors Association Dinner
February 21, 2016

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, good evening, everybody.

Audience members. Good evening.

The President. Welcome to the White House. You all look spectacular. [*Laughter*] I am going to be brief. There comes a time in the second term when the President should make his toasts short—[*laughter*]—and this is one of those moments.

Tonight I plan to fulfill my duty and give you an indisputably qualified set of remarks. I trust that you'll give them a fair hearing. [*Laughter*]

I want to start by thanking the Governors and your loved ones who are here tonight. I want to thank your chair, Governor Gary Herbert, and your vice chair, Governor Terry McAuliffe. They're both doing outstanding jobs in their respective States.

I also want to give some special recognition to Iowa Governor Terry Branstad. Now, in December, Terry became the longest serving Governor in our Nation's history, elected to six terms—more than 21 years and counting—which means that Terry is in the rare club of people who have been inside more Iowa coffee shops and high school gyms than me. [*Laughter*] He also has done some dancing with the First Lady on stage, which——

The First Lady. Very good.

The President. It was excellent. I should also mention that tonight is the birthday of our Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell. So let's give Sally a big round of applause, wherever she is. There she is. Happy birthday, Sally.

So this is my final Governors dinner, at least my final one as President. [*Laughter*] I'm just kidding. That's a joke, people. [*Laughter*] I wanted to see how Michelle would react. [*Laughter*] But I always look forward to this weekend because it reminds me of all the great work that's being done in State capitals all across the country.

Recently, I went back to Springfield, Illinois, our home capital, and went back to the chambers where I had served as a State senator. I talked about my experiences as a legislator there. And with all sincerity, I talked about how Democrats and Republicans found a way to fight like heck, oftentimes voted along party lines, but were able to shake hands after a disagreement and, every so often, actually got some work done that benefited the people of the State; how we could assume the best in each other and not the worst and find areas of common ground.

I know that at the moment, some of you might feel a little differently about your legislators—[*laughter*]—depending on where you are in the budget process. [*Laughter*] But the truth is, as frustrating as our politics too often feels, you know the same thing that I do, which is, the people we serve don't typically think in terms of red and blue, left or right. They just want a shot to get ahead. They want to make sure that they've got a good job, that their kids can succeed, that they can save enough for retirement. They want to know that we're doing our jobs and that we are operating with a sense of fairness and that we're looking out for folks without a voice.

And in other words, you see, just as I do, the basic decency and goodness of the American people every single day. That's one of the great benefits of public service. So—[*applause*]. And you know that when you stray from that way of doing business, there is some accountability, because you're a little closer to the ground and the folks you grew up with—and you may still go to church with—will find you. You're not so far away.

So while people sometimes may wonder why I have been spending some time talking about a better politics, it's not because I'm naive. It's because, in fact, I'm giving voice to the experiences that all of us have: what makes public service so worthwhile even with all the tough stuff and scrutiny that goes with it. It's what we've seen in coffee shops and high school gyms and town hall meetings and backyard picnics. I think you, like I, believe that politics can be a noble endeavor and that a pol-

itics that better reflects our people is not only possible, but it couldn't be more important.

LBJ told a group of Governors who'd gathered just 3 days after we lost President Kennedy, "A government by checks and balances will work only when people are willing to cooperate and work together for the common good." I believe that. And I know that so many of you believe that as well.

So tonight I'd like to propose a toast to our Nation's Governors, to their loved ones that put up with them—[*laughter*]—and to all those willing to cooperate and work together for the common good.

[*At this point, the President offered a toast.*]

Audience members. Here, here.

The President. Here, here.

So I hope everybody has a wonderful evening. At this stage, I would like to invite the chairman of the National Governors Association, Governor Herbert, to come up and say a few words.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:18 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Gary R. Herbert of Utah; and Gov. Terrence R. McAuliffe of Virginia.

Remarks to the National Governors Association and a Question-and-Answer Session

February 22, 2016

The President. Thank you. Please have a seat, everybody. It is wonderful to see all of you. I hope you had just the right amount of fun last night and not too much fun. [*Laughter*] It's hard to believe that that was the final dinner Michelle and I get to host for you. Like me, some of you might be in the final year of your last term, working as hard as you can to get as much done as possible for the folks that you represent: fixing roads, educating our children, helping people retrain, appointing judges. The usual stuff. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Indisputably qualified.

The President. Those of you who have been in office for a while have also witnessed all the progress that we have made together, and it has been a partnership: the millions of new jobs created: the millions of people newly covered with health insurance, the new energy projects that are popping up all across every State that's represented here.

I do want to comment, before I take questions, on the issue of security for the American people. Whatever the—our party, we all raise our hand and take an oath and assume the solemn responsibility to protect our citizens. And that is a mission that should unite us all as Americans. Today, we're focused on three threats in particular.

First and foremost is terrorism. The attacks in Garland, Texas, in Chattanooga, in San Bernardino were attacks in good and decent communities, but they were also attacks on our entire country. As Americans, we are united in support of the men and women in uniform from every State who lead the coalition we've built with the mission to destroy ISIL. We're working with other nations to prevent terrorists from entering the United States. We're unwavering in our efforts to prevent attacks here at home. And that's where the partnership with your States come in.

This is a shared mission. We have to stay vigilant. Across the country, we've got more than 100 joint terrorism task forces—Federal, State, local experts—working together to disrupt threats. And at the State level, your fusion cells are pushing information out to law enforcement. We've also need—we also need to make sure our extraordinary law enforcement professionals and first responders have the equipment and the resources that they need. And we've got to stay united as one American family, working with communities to help prevent loved ones from becoming radicalized and rejecting any politics that tries to divide the American people on the basis of faith.

So this is something that—this is a shared project. It's not something that we do together. And one of the genuine areas of progress that I've seen since I came into office—and it was started in the previous administration, and this is one of the findings of 9/11—was breaking down some of the silos between Federal, State and local law enforcement when it comes to countering terrorism. We've made progress on that, but that's where State and local partners are absolutely critical. This is not something that the Federal Government can do alone, particularly because many of the attacks may end up being lone-wolf attacks rather than those imported from the outside.

The attack in San Bernardino killed 14 of our fellow Americans. And here's a hard truth: We probably lost even more Americans than that to guns this weekend alone. On Saturday, another one of our communities was terrorized by gun violence. As many of you read, six people were gunned down in a rampage in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Before I joined all of you, I called the mayor, the sheriff, and the police chief there and told them that they would have whatever Federal support they needed in their investigation. Their local officials and first responders, by the way, did an outstanding job in apprehending the individual very quickly. But you got families who are shattered today.

Earlier this year, I took some steps that will make it harder for dangerous people, like this individual, to buy a gun. But clearly, we're going to need to do more if we're going to keep innocent Americans safe. And I've got to assume that all of you are just as tired as I am of seeing this stuff happen in your States. So that's an area where we also need to partner and think about what we can do in a commonsense way, in a bipartisan way, without some of the ideological rhetoric that so often surrounds that issue.

A second area of threats that we're focused on is cyber threats. The technology that connects us like never before also allows our adversaries to do us harm. Hackers and nations are—have targeted our military, our corporations, the Federal Government, and State governments. They're a threat to our national security, they're also a threat to our economic leadership. They're a threat to our critical infrastructure. They're a threat to the privacy and public safety of the American people.

This is a complex challenge, and we're not going to be able to meet it alone. We've made a lot of progress these past 7 years, including sharing more information with industry and with your States. But all of us are still vulnerable. So this is why earlier this month I launched the Cybersecurity National Action Plan and proposed significant funding to push our cybersecurity efforts in a more aggressive direction. We're going to start a major overhaul of Federal computer systems. I want to do more with your States, including sharing more information about threats, improving our joint response capabilities.

We have initiated a joint bipartisan Commission made up of one of my national security advisers—former national security advisers, Tom Donilon, but joined with the former CEO of IBM, so that they can work together to help provide us a sense of direction both at the Federal and State levels, as well as the private sector, in terms of how we move forward on this. We're going to want your input. And I think that we probably have some good ideas about where your vulnerabilities are in terms of your State databases and what you're doing there. So that's an area where I think we can profitably work together.

Finally, we all have to remain vigilant when it comes to the spread of disease. Since late last year, my administration has been focused on the threat of Zika. So far, while there's no evidence of Zika transmission from mosquitoes here in the continental United States, there are confirmed cases in Puerto Rico. And as leaders, it's important that we convey very basic facts, including the fact that Zika is not like Ebola. Ebola was primarily spread from human to human. Based on what we know right now, Zika spreads predominantly through the bite of a certain kind of mosquito that's limited to certain parts of the country. Symptoms are generally very mild. Most folks don't even realize that they have it. But as all of you have read, the possible connection between Zika, birth

defects, and other serious health problems means that we've got to take precautions, particularly with respect to women who are pregnant or are trying to get pregnant.

So we're going to be fighting this disease at every level, with every tool at our disposal. I've called at—I've called on Congress to approve about $1.9 billion in emergency funding for our efforts at home and abroad, including research into better diagnostic tools, new vaccines, improved methods to—of mosquito control, and support for Puerto Rico and Territories where there are confirmed cases. And we're going to be launching an aggressive coordinated campaign with the NGA to stop Zika at the source and keep Americans healthy. I hope each of you join us, especially if you're in some of the southern States where the risk of transmission may be higher.

So fighting terrorism and gun violence, combating cyber attacks and cyber threats, guarding against the outbreak of disease—these are some areas where there shouldn't be any dispute. We've got to be working together to keep our country safe and strong. And I look forward to the partnership with the NGA and each and every one of you in all of these areas. I should point out that one of the things I'm proudest of over the course of the last 7 years is, is that the Federal coordination with State and local governments with respect to disaster response, I think, has been extraordinary. I'm really proud of the work that Craig Fugate in FEMA has done. And I think that that kind of model of partnership across many of these threats is exactly what's needed to give the American people the confidence that their government is on their side when they need it most. All right?

So with that, I'm going to take some questions. And I'm going start with your chairman, Governor Herbert.

You can use a microphone if you—here you go; you've got one here.

Federal-State Communication

Governor Gary R. Herbert of Utah. Well, thank you, Mr. President. We, again, are appreciative of your willingness to let us come and talk with you and the Vice President about issues that are near and dear to us as Governors and near and dear to us as an association of the NGA.

I'm struck by the ability that we've had to have cordial relationships with your Cabinet, and I want to compliment your people there. In fact, one of them talked about the importance of communication and used the term "cooperative Federalism" as really a way for us to get things done better in a collaborative fashion between the States and the Federal Government.

I'll just mention one that comes to my mind, and that's working with your Department of Interior, Sally Jewell, the Secretary. During the Federal shutdown, we were able to work together, communicate and collaborate, and open up the five national parks in Utah to the benefit of the people of Utah and Americans, and people—really, world travelers overall. So again, an effort of communication and cooperation, which I think is a great success.

I do harken back to a failure, maybe an epic failure of lack of communication on a previous administration where a national monument was designated in Utah—larger than the State of Delaware, two and a half times larger than Rhode Island——

Vice President Joe Biden. That's not saying much. [*Laughter*]

Gov. Herbert. Still, still. The Vice President made a little thing of that.

The President. Where's Jack? [*Laughter*]

Gov. Herbert. Yes. At any rate, the problem was that Governor Mike Leavitt then found out about that designation by reading the Washington Post. That was the other side of the coin of not good communication. I expect all Governors have got successes, and probably where we could do better. And so my question to you, Mr. President, really is in the effort of the National Governors Association: What can we do as an NGA, as States, to communicate better with the Federal Government? And what can the Federal Government do better to communicate with the States so that we have this spirit of cooperation? And really, this should go post-us. We'll all ride off into the

sunset sometime, but it would be nice if we had some kind of institutional process to make sure that we work together in a collaborative fashion, communicate better, and have better outcomes on behalf of the American people.

The President. Good. Well, first of all, I think the NGA, generally, has been a terrific partner for us. I hope you feel the same way. My instructions to my Cabinet, to my Secretaries have always been that we have certain laws, statutes, mandates that we have to abide by. We have certain policies that we care deeply about. But my instructions to them have been, you check with the Governors and the localities that are being impacted, and if they have ideas about how to achieve the mission in a more flexible, sensible way, and we've got that flexibility, we should exercise it. And that's been my consistent message, and I think many of you have benefited from those kinds of interactions.

What I'd do is, Gary, throw the question back at you, not for today, but maybe one of the projects that we can do jointly together is sort of do an inventory of what's worked and what hasn't, institutionally, in terms of communication. Where have been—there are areas where Governors have been concerned that they haven't gotten the heads-up fast enough? Where are the areas where communications has been strong? And let's see if we can improve that communication.

But my overall impression has been, communication with the Cabinet Secretaries has been good. I think that our Intergovernmental Affairs Office has tried to be very active. There may be some additional things that we could do to improve that, and I'd be happy to hear ideas from your side about what could be done.

I will tell you that probably where there's the biggest gap in communications has to do with our interactions with Governors versus our interactions with your congressional delegations. That's where, oftentimes, things diverge. So we'll have a conversation with the Governors, and they'll identify a priority, we work out some approach to get something done, and then, it turns out that the congressional delegations have an entirely different idea.

And the biggest example would be on transportation, for example, where Anthony Foxx probably traveled to every single one of your States, talked—and before that, Ray LaHood—talked about things that needed to get done, everybody was excited about getting them done, but we just couldn't get Congress to move.

And so one of the things that I think would be interesting as we explore better communications is how do we maybe create a triangle where we have some interaction with States—a State's Governors and its congressional delegation at the same time. Now, sometimes, that's difficult because they're of different parties, maybe different political agendas. Sometimes, though, there may be commonality, and it's just a matter of closing the loop so that congressional staff know what the Governor's staff is saying, know what our staff is saying.

Vice President Biden. Mr. President, why don't you just assign the Congress to them? [*Laughter*]

The President. Just assign the Congress to them generally?

Vice President Biden. Assign the Congress to the Governors. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, they've got their own legislatures. I know that they enjoy those interactions tremendously. [*Laughter*]

Next, Terry McAuliffe. Where is Terry? Here he is.

Trade/Trans-Pacific Partnership

Governor Terence R. McAuliffe of Virginia. Thank you, Mr. President. Let me first—great night last night. Thank you on behalf of all the Governors. Chaka Khan. I've been listening to her for 40 years.

The President. That was Michelle, basically, that put that together. I tried to take credit last night, and nobody believed me. [*Laughter*] And rightly so.

Gov. McAuliffe. Let me just say that we just finished, Mr. President, 4 great days of the Governors Association with the great leadership of Gary. But we met—Gary and I met with your team, Jerry, about 6 weeks ago, and

Valerie—we laid out what we needed. Your administration gave us everything we needed. We had the secure briefing at the FBI. So let me just say this, this is has been a great meeting. On behalf of all the Governors here, let's give a round of the applause to the administration and the great work that they do.

The President. Thank you.

Gov. McAuliffe. And thank you very much.

We're here from 50 States, different political parties. We all have different interests in our States, but one issue that brings a lot of us together is the issue of trade. It is a global economy that we have today. Many of us do international trade trips. I've done 13 in my first 2 years. I just got back from the Middle East and from Cuba. Ninety-five percent of the world's customers live outside of America. Eighty-one percent of the growth in the next 5 years will occur outside America. Trade is critical to grow our economies.

So, Mr. President, could you give us an update on the trade policy, where the legislation is? And most importantly, what can we do to help you push trade with the Congress? Thank you.

The President. Well, I appreciate the—I appreciate that question, Terry. And Governor Herbert and I were talking about this a little bit yesterday.

When I visited Utah, you told me how much of Utah's economy depends on exports and international trade. And that's true for so many of us. Now, maybe the way to answer this is to give sort of a broad overview of how I think the politics have shaped the narrative around trade, and then let me give you some of the facts and what's going on with TPP.

Over our lifetimes, and certainly accelerated over the last 25, 30 years, this has become a global economy and not a national economy. The global supply chain, distribution; the fact that a company can set up house anywhere where there's an Internet service; the fact that these big cargo containers can ship things more efficiently than ever before; the logistical hubs and speed with which they can move goods and services around the world—all of this has created a global marketplace.

The good news is that we are best positioned to take this—take advantage of this global marketplace than anybody else. We've got the best cards. We've got the best businesses. We've got the best technology, the best innovation. We've got the best workers. We are a free market, dynamic economy like nobody else.

The challenge is that there have been disruptions as a consequence of that global trade. There is no doubt about it. And in every one of your States, there have been times where somebody has been affected. And not all the trade deals in the past were designed just to look out for workers. There were times where it was good for consumers; it was good for the businesses that may have found lower wages. But it wasn't always good for those communities that had big plants—particularly in manufacturing—that got shipped overseas.

And that's made people suspicious about trade and understandably so. On the one hand, people benefit from low prices and low inflation. And the degree to which globalization has given people access to more products at lower prices than ever before, that's something that people maybe take for granted. But what they see very directly oftentimes around trade is, this plant closed; you used to be able to walk in, even without a college education, get a job. If you worked hard, you'd have a middle class life and benefits and health care and could take care of your family. And now those jobs have contracted.

So that's the prism through which a lot of folks have been looking at trade. And I understand and am sympathetic because I've seen this in my own home State of why people are suspicious. But if you look at what's happened over the last 7 years since I came into office, first of all, exports drove the early part of this recovery. That was true in every State and in almost every sector. If you're an agricultural State, the ag community was making out great for the vast majority of this administration because of exports.

The second thing that happened was, we actually rebuilt manufacturing and started bringing manufacturing jobs back here, because what folks started to figure out was, U.S.

workers have become so competitive and we remain such a significant marketplace, and our energy costs here are low, that it makes sense oftentimes to locate here even if you're paying a higher wage, because net-net, it's going to be more profitable. So we have created more manufacturing jobs than at any time since the 1990s, despite an open trade regime.

And it is because of my confidence in our ability to compete, and the fact that we have no choice but to compete, that we said, where's the next big market where folks are selling us goods but we're not able to sell them goods? And we looked to the Asia-Pacific region. That is the fastest growing, most dynamic, youngest population in the world, and where, invariably, economic activity is going to be driving much of the world economy for decades to come.

And our concern there was that China was the 800-pound gorilla, and if we allowed them to set trade rules out there, American businesses and American workers were going to be cut out. And if we got in there and we set the terms of trade—making sure that there were high labor standards, making sure that there were higher environmental standards, making sure that intellectual property was protected, making sure that the things that we do well were protected, and that those countries that are selling to us right now, but are keeping our goods out lowered those barriers—if we did all those things, then it would be an improvement for American businesses and American workers, and we would know that we would be able to compete in those areas for years to come.

So we got TPP done. Mr. Michael Froman is here. He can—if he hasn't already, he will brief you on every paragraph—[*laughter*]—every comma, every "t" that's crossed and "i" that's dotted on the agreement.

But the bottom line is this: It is, I believe, indisputable that once we have TPP in place, we—American companies, American workers—will be better off than the existing trade regime that we have right now. I mean, I'll just give you a very simple example. Right now there are 18,000 tariffs—taxes, essentially—on American goods and services that would all be eliminated. So if you're—you've got a rancher in Colorado, they can sell beef to Japan in ways that they cannot do right now, and that is a huge market for them. If you are interested in selling cars in Southeast Asia, right now, oftentimes, they're going to slap a 70-percent tax on the value of the car, which means you're not competitive. We're going to bring those down.

Nobody has described for me—none of the critics of this trade regime—trade deal have described for me how we're better off with the current status quo, where those folks are all keeping tariffs high, than we would be with TPP. What they argue against is old trade deals. And I keep on explaining to them, look, I can't do anything about what may have happened 40, 30 years ago, but I can do something about what's going on right now.

And by the way, because Mexico and Canada are signatories to this deal, it actually does strengthen labor and environmental protections within NAFTA, which previously had been one of the main complaints of critics.

Now, having said all that, the emotions around trade are still strong. Labor unions—and I am a big labor guy—they're not happy with me on this. They disagree with me because they have memories of this weakening the manufacturing base in America. And no matter how much I indicate that the facts show this will improve the position of American workers and we will slowly raise labor standards overseas as a consequence, they are going to—they're adamant in their opposition, which means that we have—in order to get this passed through Congress—have to depend on a set of strong, protrade Democrats who recognize the importance of trade to their economies and their membership, their constituencies, and Republicans who historically, at least, have been in favor of the free market and in favor of trade.

I am cautiously optimistic that we can still get it done. Leader McConnell and Speaker Ryan both have been supportive of this trade deal. They've had some concerns along the margins of the trade deal. I'll just give you one example. With respect to tobacco, we said very explicitly in this trade deal that any country that regulates tobacco is not somehow violating

trade agreements as long as it's done fairly, as long as they're not discriminating against American tobacco companies versus their own or those of other countries, but as a public health matter, they can regulate tobacco. That raises some sensitivities in Kentucky.

So there are those kinds of issues. But overall, they have been supportive. The Presidential campaigns have created some noise within and roiled things a little bit within the Republican Party as well as the Democratic Party around this issue. I think we should just have a good, solid, healthy debate about it. We're going to sign to enter this agreement, present it formally with some sort of implementation documents to Congress at some point this year. And my hope is, is that we can get votes.

What Congress can do—or what all of you can do to help is to talk to your congressional delegations and let them know this is really important. It is inconceivable if, for example, you are in California, that you don't want a Trans-Pacific Partnership that ensures the gateway for commerce in the Pacific is open to California businesses and workers for decades to come. It's inconceivable that you'd be opposed to that. I mean, we've got longshoremen in California who are opposed to that. I said, who—where do you think your jobs come from? It's from moving stuff off those containers onto trucks and rail to fan out all across the country. This creates jobs for you.

But that gives you some sense of some of the emotions that I think are sometimes blocking this up. All of you, though, can really lift up the benefits for your States and talk to your congressional delegations directly. Talk to your businesses, by the way, because they'll tell you how important this is to them.

All right. Who else we've got? Yes, go ahead.

Climate Change/Energy Research and Development

Governor Matthew H. Mead of Wyoming. Mr. President, Matt Mead from Wyoming. A great celebration that's going on this year is the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service. And as the State with the first national park, we're very proud. This is a great opportunity for the country to celebrate parks and what they bring not only to our Nation, but to our world.

The President. You've got some pretty nice ones.

Gov. Mead. Well, you could even say the best, if you really wanted to. [*Laughter*]

The President. I wasn't going to go there, but I—they're really nice, I've got to note.

Gov. Mead. Just interested in accuracy, Mr. President. [*Laughter*] But anyway, Mr. President, thank you for last night. We all enjoyed that.

So I'm chair of the natural resources committee for the National Governors Association. And we had a good meeting this week. There was discussion. And certainly, we don't all agree as Governors in terms of, sort of, a national energy policy and where we should go.

As you know, we are a big mineral State in Wyoming. And there's other mineral States here as well. And I know you've addressed climate change, and we may have different points of view on that. But it does seem, from my perspective, that if the concern is fossil fuels, we have to continue to invest in R&D to say, listen, it's real. I mean, coal produces 40 percent electricity in this country. If it's—if that's the concern, let's work to clean it up.

We appreciate the work of the Secretary of Energy in doing that. We now see, though, a 5-percent reduction in R&D in terms of where that may go. And at least from our standpoint, we're investing in R&D in our State on how to make improvements in coal and other energy resources. And so I think from the National Governors' perspective, is there—what is the long-term view in how we make things better where we have areas of concerns?

Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Sure. Well, I appreciate the constructive conversations that have taken place between the NGA and the energy-producing States.

Number one, climate change is real. The science is clear. We can debate how we approach the problem, but we can't debate the science. I just have to be very clear about that. At least, the analogy that I've used is, is that if

you went to a doctor and he said, you've got a disease, and you said, you wanted a second opinion—the second doctor said you had the disease, you went to 100 doctors and 99 of them said you had the disease, at a certain point, you'd say, I've got to do something about this.

And that essentially is the situation with respect to climate change. Ninety-nine percent of scientists are saying this is a really serious problem. Not a "sort of," "kind of," "maybe off in the distant future" problem. This is a problem that is going to get worse in the lifetime of our children and our grandchildren. And there is such a thing as being too late on this. Because if you start getting into a feedback loop where fundamental weather patterns and ocean temperatures are changing, we can't reverse it. And the effects will be profound. So that's point number one.

Point number two is, in order to grow the economy, we've got to have energy. And economic growth remains a top priority for Democrats and Republicans alike and every Governor and every President; whoever takes my place, they're going to want to grow the economy. And by the way, that's true internationally. In fact, there are countries like India where it's even more desperate. They don't have electricity. They've got to produce electricity in order to develop. And if we aren't giving them options, if the only message we have for them is, stay poor, we're not going to solve the problem. So this is not an either-or issue. We've got to grow the economy, which means we've got to produce energy. And we've got to deal with climate change.

The good news is that technology and research and development are accelerating rapidly. And because of the Paris Agreement that we've struck, you are going to see more investment from the private sector—not just from governmental sectors—and that is going to accelerate progress even more.

You take an example like solar. When I came into office, we set goals that we thought were really ambitious. And the amount of solar energy that is being produced now and the unit costs dropping faster than any of us imagined means that we could be on a path where a huge portion of our energy needs can readily be provided through renewable energy, clean energy, much faster than any of us would have anticipated even a few years earlier.

Now, with respect to those States that continue to have a significant traditional fossil fuel–extractive set of industries, number one, we have not discouraged, we've encouraged production. Throughout my Presidency, oil and gas production have gone up significantly. We have put ourselves in a position, because of new technologies, to produce more than ever before, and that's changed the geopolitical landscape. We have—Sally Jewell, I think, has been, and prior to her, Ken Salazar, have tried to be very flexible in thinking about how do we continue to meet our energy needs. We haven't shut down energy production outside of very sensitive areas that are of significant concern.

The main shift that's taken place is, because U.S. production has been so high, prices have plummeted, and that's changed the equation for private sector companies. That's a global price issue. And the second thing that's changed, frankly, is natural gas started supplanting coal because it became so cheap, and that hurt coal industries.

Now, having said that, I continue to believe that there are areas of research and development that have to be done because we are going to continue to use fossil fuels for our lifetime. Those aren't going to immediately go away. And certainly, they will be used in other countries. And if we can figure out how to make those cleaner, that helps all of us. I want India and China to know how to use clean coal because they're going to be building coal plants anyway. And I—if we've got technology that can help make sure that it's not emitting huge amount of carbon, all the better.

So, historically, since I've come into office, we have invested in technologies to capture carbon from coal-fired plants. The technologies are there; the problem is that they're just really expensive right now. And so given relative prices to natural gas and other options, they haven't been deployed. We are going to

continue to invest in trying to bring those costs down. But frankly, in this marketplace, it may be a while before it is economical for anybody to imagine wanting to use that. Ironically, what would actually accelerate clean coal technology—so-called clean coal technology—would be the work that we did in Paris to restrict the amount of carbon that's being produced. That means that it starts becoming more expensive to generate carbon, and there's greater incentive then to—for private sector dollars, as well as public money, to go into research and how do we capture coal.

Similarly, when it comes to oil and gas, a lot of methane is generated from the extraction of oil and gas. And we want to invest in research that helps us figure out how to reduce the methane that also causes climate change. So my goal is to increase overall research and development dollars in energy—in the energy sector. We underinvest as a nation relative to, for example, our expenditures on health care research. I'm all for that. We've got our cancer moonshot, and we're significantly increasing our investment in medical research. But we should be doing the exact same thing on energy.

How it's allocated is something that probably I'll make sure that Ernie meets with your Governors to talk about. But I want to be honest with you: If those States with extractive industries are not currently preparing for the fact that the energy mix is going to continue to change over time, you're probably doing a disservice to your constituencies. And what we should be doing at the Federal Government level is helping maximize your production, minimizing your pollution, but also preparing you for the fact that 20, 30 years from now, there's going to be a higher mix of clean energy and a lower mix of traditional fossil fuels. That is almost inevitable. Even if there is somebody in this seat—in this White House who disagrees with me on all this stuff, it's still going to happen, just because of the trend lines internationally. And we should prepare ourselves for that. All right?

Yes, Mark.

Trade/China

Governor Mark B. Dayton of Minnesota. Mr. President, I had the chance to speak with you before about the—I appreciated the chance to speak with you before about the impact of China's dumping on Minnesota's iron ore. And thank you again for sending your Chief of Staff up to meet there. As I've talked with other Governors here this weekend, the impact of China's exports and dumping have been affecting a lot of other industries too. And I'm wondering if it's—given your emphasis on free trade—and you're right about that—if there's also a way that you can be more aggressive about preventing China from doing what it's doing.

The President. Good. Well, first of all, the good news is, we've been more aggressive than previous administrations when it comes to bringing enforcement actions. And this is an area where even the steelworkers, as much as they may object to TPP, would acknowledge we've done a lot on this front. The other piece of good news is that we actually had a companion bill to our trade promotion authority that just passed the House and the Senate, and that I'm getting prepared to sign, that will give us additional tools for enforcement—more resources, more personnel—allows us to take more aggressive actions.

So you're going to see firm, tough enforcement of our existing trade laws. What is important is that we don't get confused by thinking that we should close off trade as an enforcement tool, because that is not possible. What is possible is making sure that everybody is playing on a level playing field and that people are operating fairly. And frankly, I don't think it's any secret that China in the past has not always operated fairly. They are now in a process where they're trying to transition their economic model. They recognize that they can't forever sustain an export-driven growth model. But it's going to take some time, and it's tempting for them to solve short-term problems by just dumping a bunch of state-subsidized goods into the U.S. market. And we've been very clear with them about the fact that that's

not going to work. We're going to put in place tools to make sure it doesn't work.

This is similar to the issue of currency manipulation. In the past, there has been currency manipulation by the Chinese. Right now, frankly, there are interventions to prop up their currency rather than to devalue it, because a lot of people have been nervous about the Chinese economy. But we've said to them, you've got to have an orderly, market-based currency system that's not designed to advantage your companies over ours. And we are consistently pushing them very hard. And that, and we've got some new tools to make progress on that, thanks to the bill that was just passed.

Yes. Governor Hogan.

Regulatory Reform

Governor Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr., of Maryland. Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, as your next-door neighbor in Maryland, thank you again for the hospitality.

The President. Absolutely.

Gov. Hogan. And on a personal note, I want to thank you for the—you personally reaching out when I was going through my cancer battle. It meant an awful lot to me.

I'm the chairman of the Economic Development and Commerce Committee for the NGA, and we had a terrific meeting on Saturday. I, unfortunately, was not in attendance because we had a funeral for one of our fallen law enforcement officers that was killed in the line of duty. But Governor Tomblin, from West Virginia, did a terrific job running the meeting; he's the vice chair. There was a lot of terrific discussions that came out of that. A lot of agreement between the Governors, a lot of bipartisan cooperation, and people focused on a number of important issues. One of them was regulatory reform, something that we're doing in Maryland and finding a lot of bipartisan support on. I think there are Democratic and Republican Governors who believe that this is important to help us grow businesses and grow jobs.

The President. Right.

Gov. Hogan. And I believe it's something that you feel is important. And I remember last year when we had our meeting, you talked about that as well. So my question for you is, would you be willing to commit to have the administration work with the RGA, with a task force, on taking a look at this regulatory review at the Federal, State, and local level?

The President. Absolutely. Although, I think you said RGA and I'm assuming you meant NGA. [*Laughter*] But I'll work——

Gov. Hogan. Whoa, whoa, whoa. I was talking about bipartisanship, and then said RGA. That was a dumb mistake. It was the NGA. [*Laughter*]

The President. I was about to say, you just cut out your Democratic brethren here. [*Laughter*]

But no, just a quick word about regulation, and this, I think, reiterates something that I've said in the past. There are some regulations we have put forward that some of you don't like. More commonly, there are regulations that we are obliged to enforce. They didn't just pop out of our heads, but we have to enforce them, and you don't like them.

There are some regulations I don't like that I think are hugely inefficient or were well intended, but proved not to work well. Or just the economy has changed. I mean, my favorite example was, there were a bunch of rules around rail, right? Or trucks, where they didn't account for the fact that there's GPS now. And so what I have done is assigned my Cabinet and the Office of Management and Budget, OMB, to work vigorously, not only to scrub new regulations we may be proposing, but to look back and see what are the old ones on the books that don't make sense anymore.

The good news is, we've made some progress. We don't get a lot of credit for that because it's sort of the dog that doesn't bark. If we get rid of wasteful regulations, we don't get a lot of applause for it. But we have eliminated tons of paperwork. We have eliminated tons of forms that have to be filled out. We have streamlined a whole lot of processes. And we're interested in doing more.

And this is an area during the next year where we've got room to do more because we don't need Congress on a lot of this stuff to do it. So I am very much in favor of the NGA—give us a list of those regulatory actions or con-

straints that you find most troublesome, most illogical, most frustrating. And I can't guarantee you that we will be able to eliminate all those regulations. Some of them may be statutory, and we've got no choice, even though we agree with you. Some of them we may just not agree with you. I mean, there are going to be some environmental regulations where some Governors think this is inconvenient, it's impeding development. And we're going to say, well, this is protecting children's health, for example.

And so there are going to be some areas of disagreement. My suspicion is, there are going to be some areas where we really welcome your advice. And we'll do everything we can to see if we can strike some of these ineffective regulations off the books before we get out of here.

So I'm very eager to work on you on this. And by the way, if any of you doubt my claim that we have actually eliminated a whole bunch of regulations, we can give you a whole manual. Shaun Donovan knows because I've charged him with this. And prior to that, Mr. Froman and others and Sylvia, before she was she was HHS Secretary, they've all been working on this. They know how important I think this is.

I do not believe in regulation for regulation's sake, contrary to rumor. I—this idea that somehow I get a kick out of big government, it's just not the case. The truth of the matter is, if something is working without us being involved, we've got more than enough to do without getting involved in it. We really do. It's not like I'm waking up every morning thinking, how can I add more work for me. [*Laughter*] I don't think that way.

So if there's something that we can stop doing or do smarter, do better, we're happy to do it. But a lot of times, when folks say this is a bad regulation that's burdening government and not helping anybody, they're just looking at one side of the equation. And when you actually subject it to the cost-benefit analysis, it turns out that it's saving a lot lives, it's keeping a lot of people out of the hospital, it's making a big difference.

I should mention, by the way, when I was coming up back in the eighties, when I was a law student, cost-benefit analysis was considered a really radical, conservative idea. And this administration has been more vigorous in applying cost-benefit analysis than any prior administration, including the one that just preceded me. I mean, we have been very stringent and very tight, and our numbers all check out when it comes to the costs and the benefits that we apply to these tests. Even on some of the big regulations you hear about that you don't like, they're not passed—they're not issued unless we think that the benefits substantially outweigh the costs. And we can—we have the numbers to prove it.

So for those of you who think that I'm just a big government, crazy liberal—[*laughter*]—we're actually—we crunch some numbers around here. We take it very seriously.

Yes, Peter.

Drug Abuse Treatment and Prevention Efforts

Governor Peter E. Shumlin of Vermont. Mr. President, thank you. I'm always amazed to be in these sessions where you spend so much time with us, and your next answer is even more brilliant than the last. So thank you so much for being such a great President.

The President. He's a Democrat, as you can tell. [*Laughter*]

Gov. Shumlin. You can't get over it. A Republican just said that to me. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes, yes, yes.

Gov. Shumlin. We spoke on Friday a little about the opiate crisis. I want to give you both an update and ask you a question. I think that we are probably united in making real progress across America—Governors, Congress folks, certainly you and your administration—in helping us to fight this battle. And as someone who was on the front lines of this pretty early, I think, much like your frustration with the gun challenges, where you're constantly consoling moms and dads and parents, we had at our health and welfare committee, which is chaired by Governor Baker and Governor Hassan, we heard from another mom who lost her son. There was someone there who told me that

they had, in their State, one of our Governors had a family lose their son and their daughter.

So I think what we're all trying to do—and frankly, Director of the FBI, Loretta Lynch is a huge partner with us in this—is do criminal justice reform, start treating this as a disease and not a crime, get treatment built out as fast as we can, and get Narcan out as fast as we can so we stop losing lives unnecessarily. Those are the three things I think that we all are doing in some way.

I mentioned on Friday if—one of my challenges—and I think other Governors are finding this—is as you build out treatment, and particularly in rural America, we can't get enough docs who are able to meet the demand of our waiting lists. So if we can get physician assistants, nurse practitioners to be able to prescribe the recovery drugs, we'd all be better off. I mean, as you probably know, they can now pass this stuff out. They can prescribe Oxycontin, but we don't let them prescribe the stuff that gets you off the Oxycontin.

But the most important one—and I just want to give you an update—our committee voted unanimously to adopt protocols on prescribing practices for Oxycontin and other painkillers. And I'm just curious—we can do that as Governors. It takes time. It's not—it doesn't apply to all 50 States. When you look at the numbers on this stuff, it's just staggering.

Now, I know you know this, but in 2010, we prescribed enough Oxycontin to keep every adult in America high for a month. In 2012, we prescribed enough Oxycontin to give—250 million doses—to give every adult American their own personal bottle. And I guess I'm asking you if, by rule or with putting pressure on FDA, you might consider a national approach, which simply says, for minor procedures, we're going to limit this to 10 pills, and after that, you've got to come back for more. Because there is a direct correlation between the lives we're losing—the kids are the biggest victims of this. I've got my Agency of Human Services struggling to come up with enough foster kids as we put more and more kids into custody because their parents do horrid, horrid things to them when they're under the influence of this stuff.

It is such an epidemic. And if this was—we're losing 130 people a day. If this was—imagine that we were losing 130 people a day in America to terrorism. I mean, we've got to come up with a more rational approach to prescribing prescription drugs. The—to be candid, the docs, the AMA are resistant to listening to politicians like us talking about how many pills to prescribe. But is there something you could do on a national level that would help us get out of this tragic mess?

The President. Okay. Well, first of all, I appreciate the work that Governor Baker and Governor Hassan and you and others are doing on this.

As all of you know, I went down to West Virginia and had an entire hearing on this. And the stories you hear are heartbreaking. And what was striking was the number of high-ranking elected officials in the State whose own families had been affected directly by this.

And so the good news is that there is strong bipartisan support to address this issue. I would be remiss if I didn't also say the good news is that the broader society is recognizing the importance of taking a public health approach, as well as a criminalization approach when it comes to drug addiction and abuse generally. Because I think when it was isolated to certain low-income communities or minority communities, the tendency was, jail was a sufficient deterrent or approach. And as it has affected a broader and broader cross-section of America, people start realizing this is a complicated problem. There has to be a law enforcement element, but there also has to be a public health element to it.

I want to thank—Sylvia Burwell has been at the front lines of this at HHS; also, by the way, a native West Virginian, so she's seen her own community affected by this.

Loretta Lynch has been hugely active in thinking about how does the criminal element of this fit with the public health process. I want to recognize Tom Vilsack as well though—one of your own as a former Governor—who has been outstanding in chairing our Rural Coun-

cil. And just 2 weeks ago, we convened—Tom convened a meeting in which we said, how do we get all hands on deck, all the agencies to focus on this in a comprehensive way? And my hope is, is that they've started to share with you and your committee what it is that we're looking at.

I think there is going to be a lot of overlap. I—my suspicion is, we're going to be seeing the same things. A couple of points I just want to make very quickly. Number one, the most striking statistic that I—that came out of that meeting, and I wasn't in the entire meeting, was that in 85 percent of rural counties in America, there is insufficient or none—or no drug treatment or mental health treatment available.

So part of what's happening here—and we talked about this at an earlier meeting, Peter—you've got somebody who works on a farm, gets injured, they don't even have a doctor close by. It takes them 2 hours to drive. And finally, the pain gets so bad, they head out there, they get to the doctor. They don't necessarily have health insurance, although they should at this point depending on what State they're living in. Just a small comment on the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid expansion. [*Laughter*]

But if they don't have health insurance, they drive out and the doc says, well, you know what, you need an operation. You need rotator cuff surgery. You need this; you need that. Doc, I can't afford that. Can you just give me something to kill the pain? And they get a bottle, they drive off, they get hooked on it. And then, it turns out that it's a lot cheaper to refill the prescription with heroin on the street than it is to try to manage getting more of these pills. And then, folks are off to the races.

And what we've seen is, is that those who are marketing heroin are now tracking where the—which communities are most vulnerable. So what we have to do, I think, is to make a big push for additional treatment and mental health services in rural communities generally; make a big push for public health and prevention in communities generally and then have a very specific approach to working with the docs, the hospitals, the providers so that they are not overprescribing. And that can be done at a national level. But it is most profitably done, I think, if we have bipartisan support from the Governors so that by the time it gets to the national level, there is consensus, and there's not a lot of politics involved in it.

But I guess my point—the reason I raise the general issues of public health is that if we go to the doctors right now and say, "Don't overprescribe," without providing some mechanisms for people in these communities to deal with the pain that they have or the issues that they have, then we're not going to solve the problem. Because the pain is real. The mental illness is real. The—in some cases, addiction is already there. In some cases, these are underserved communities when it comes to the number of doctors and nurses and practitioners.

I agree with you, by the way, that we should be pushing the doctors; this is true for our health care system generally. Advanced practice nurses and physician's assistants can do more than they currently are allowed to do. And that could save the whole system money, but it could also prevent some of the overprescribing that is currently taking place.

But we're looking at a comprehensive approach. What I'd suggest—Cynthia, have you guys already met with the Governors' task force on this to——

Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Mathews Burwell. We didn't this time, but we'll follow up directly—[*inaudible*].

The President. Good. Yes. But we're all over this. And I—we appreciate your interest.

This is an area where I can get agreement from Bernie Sanders and Mitch McConnell. That doesn't happen that often—[*laughter*]—but this is one. And it indicates the severity of the issue. All right.

Yes.

Federal Deficit and Debt/Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Governor Matthew G. Bevin of Kentucky. As a non-Democrat, I can't be quite as gratuitous, but I do appreciate the graciousness, the generosity of your time, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

Gov. Bevin. Quick question. Something that effects each of us as Governors individually is debt. It's crippling to some of us, less so to others. Curious as to your thoughts on the debt of this Nation and the lack of any political discourse on either side of the aisle in any of the debates on this issue, and what in the next 10 months your administration can do to draw attention to this, to address it, to change—start to change the course of direction that is currently underway.

The President. Good. Well, we're going to be releasing a budget, so that will be a significant topic of conversation. Maybe I'll just break it out into its component parts.

Obviously, the Federal Government—unlike State governments—does not have in the Constitution that at the end of each year it has to balance its budget. I know that there are those in this room who would probably be for the Federal Government having a balanced budget amendment. I would not be one of those, because in modern economic history what is clear is that there has to be some flexibility for the Federal Government, the sovereign Nation, to issue debt in order to deal with recession, national emergencies, and so on.

What is also true is the way that the Federal Government keeps the books is different than an ordinary business. A lot of times people will use a family or a business as an example. But just to take one instance, the Federal Government doesn't have a separate accounting for capital expenditures, which would then depreciate. And so you'd have a whole other way of doing bookkeeping.

[*At this point, a cell phone rang.*]

The President. There you go. That happens to me all the time. [*Laughter*]

So the analogy is not exactly the same as the Federal Government versus State governments or businesses or families.

Now, having said that, the good news is that since I came into office, we've reduced the deficit by two-thirds. That is a combination of the recovery, which brought in more tax revenue; raising taxes on the top 2 percent, which everybody claimed was going to be a jobs killer, but we've now had 14 million jobs created or more, essentially, over the last 6 years; and we've made some cuts in spending. And all of that has led to a two-thirds reduction. And that, our budget will reflect, we will sustain more or less in the out-years over the next decade.

The real problem that we have when it comes to debt is very simple. It is that our population is getting older, and we use a lot of health care. And health care, we spend more for less, frankly, than most other advanced nations, partly because we do a lot of emergency room care. Some of it is because we overprescribe, we overtest. Some of it is, we drive innovation and technology and people always want the best stuff. But that costs money. Some of it is because the accident of how our health care system evolved means that we've got private sector involvement, and they've got to make a profit, and they've got overhead, and so forth.

So there are a whole bunch of reasons, but essentially, we spend about 6- to 8-percent more than our wealthy-nation counterparts per capita on health care. That delta, that difference, is our debt. And that is the reason why, since I came into office, I was interested in reforming health care. It was not just the compassion I felt for people personally being impacted, getting sick and losing their home, or not being able to get care for their kids, or having to go to the emergency room because of routine issues that should have been dealt with by a primary care physician. It also had to do with the fact that this system is hugely inefficient, and if we don't make it more efficient, then we're not going to solve our debt problem.

So what you'll see reflected, I think, in the budget that I present is, we have stabilized what we're adding to it each year in terms of discretionary spending, taxes, revenue, income, and—but what we're going to have to tackle long term is health care spending. And if we don't do that, then—we can cut food stamps, and we can cut WIC programs, and we can cut education programs, and you can cut

out Head Start, you can cut out every single discretionary program that Democrats support and a lot of Governors—Republican Governors support, but sometimes, Members of Congress say are a waste or big government or what have you. You can get rid of all that discretionary spending. It won't matter. Because the big-ticket item is Medicare, Medicaid. And in the private sector, the big-ticket item, that's where the inflation is, is on the health care side.

So my hope is, is that we get into a serious conversation. Maybe it will have to happen once I'm gone, because the Affordable Care Act and the debate around health care has gotten so politicized, so toxic that we can't have a sensible conversation about it, despite the fact that I implemented a measure that was passed by a Republican Governor. But that's a whole other question. It used—and we've embraced cost-saving measures that used to be championed by Republicans, and then suddenly, now this is some Obama scheme or plot. But maybe once I'm gone, we can go back to have a sensible conversation between Democrats and Republicans about how we should incentivize greater efficiency, better outcomes, higher quality for lower cost in our health care system. And if we do that, that's going to make the biggest difference.

The single biggest thing that we were able to do to bring down any additions to the debt since I've been in office was, over the last 3 to 4 years we've kept health care inflation at its lowest rate in 50 years since the Affordable Care Act passed. And because of that, the Medicare trust fund, we essentially saved well over $100 billion—I think it was about $160 billion and counting—just by making health care more efficient. And by the way, people got just as good or better care. This wasn't done through rationing, it wasn't done through us cutting people out of the program. It just had to do with better delivery.

That's part of the reason, by the way, why I think that Medicaid expansion, where it has been implemented, is smart. It is going to prevent you from having bigger problems down the road that your States are going to have to pay for. I don't expect any of you to agree with me right now, but if you'd just look at where it's been implemented effectively, it's going to save you money over the long term. It's been done really well in Kentucky, but that's a whole other question.

I've got time for one more question or two? I'm going to make it two. Jack.

Criminal Justice Reform

Governor Jack A. Markell of Delaware. Mr. President, thank you. On a topic that I know is of significant interest to you—and the Attorney General talked to us earlier about criminal justice reform—most of our conversation here is always about policy, but I do have one specific thought regarding your convening power, which I have seen play out incredibly well when it comes to some health care issues as well as some college access issues.

We all know that one of the most important predictors regarding whether the 97 percent of the people who are in our prisons, when they come out, whether or not they're going to be on a decent path, is whether or not they can get a job. And so there's a lot of great work going on around the country, both Democratic and Republican Governors alike. The beauty of this is, it really is a bipartisan issue. But in addition to all the great policy work that's being done, one of the most important things, I think, is getting employers to the table. And this is an issue, as I was speaking with Valerie last night, an issue I was invited a couple months ago to New Orleans by the Koch brothers to speak at a conference on criminal justice reform. Never really expected to be invited by the Koch brothers to speak at something—[*laughter*]—but really doing some terrific work.

But I do think there really is an opportunity to get employers across the country to the table to recognize the importance of this issue, the fact that a lot of these folks could actually do a good job. And I think if we can move the needle not only on all the policy work, but on also getting employers to take a chance on some folks, a lot of them really very low risk ex-offenders, we can really make a difference. We

can keep them out of prison and contributing. Because I think we all recognize that there's just no way we as a country, we as any community can be successful when we have so many able-bodied, able-minded people who are staying on the fringes. And we have lots of populations in that category, but I think the ex-offenders is one specifically where the White House's convening authority could make a huge difference.

The President. Good. Well, I appreciate that, Jack. Let me compliment a number of Governors around this table who have initiated their own reforms at the State level. Part of the reason why we have confidence that we can do crime smarter, keep crime rates low, reduce long-term sentences for nonviolent offenders is because there are a lot of States that already showed the way, including some very conservative States. I mean, this is an area where, for example, Texas did some really smart stuff, and it's worked. And so I would urge all of you to take a look at what's been done in—at the State level as well as some of the data and reports that we're generating as we pushed for Federal criminal justice reform.

But to your specific point, I was up in Newark to highlight best practices, and there was a Federal judge there, relatively young woman, district court judge, who had partnered with the local community, the U.S. attorney there. They'd gotten a little bit of money out of a tiny little program that we're trying to expand within the Justice Department to make reentry work. And there was a young man who was there who is 37 years old, had spent 10 years in prison, had gotten in trouble before that, then finally got nabbed for a serious, though nonviolent, drug offense. Went to jail for 10 years, and he described what it was like. He had decided he was going to turn his life around.

And he gets out, and by lying on his résumé, he gets a job at a Burger King. And he is dropped off in the same neighborhood that had produced him and had gotten him into this trouble, and so he is standing there, 27-year-old—or 30-year-old man, wearing the Jack-in-the-Box—I think it was a Jack-in-the-Box outfit. And his old gangbanger friends are coming up and saying: "Man, you're wearing the same shoes you went into jail with. And you sure you want to keep on doing this for minimum wage?"

And he described the temptations that were involved. He couldn't—he didn't have permanent housing. He didn't have money for a car. He didn't have new clothes. He had no idea how to write a résumé, but he wanted to do the right thing. And this program, the Federal judge dug into her own pocket in some cases—the probation officers were this great team, incredible—really humane, caring folks—helped him get into a community college, helped him study to become an EMT, and by the time I met him, he is, like, a 37-year-old man who is working for the State as an EMT. Paying taxes, law abiding, mentoring younger people. And the amount of money that was spent to save this young man was a fraction of what had been—it cost to incarcerate him.

And the likelihood of recidivism has dropped precipitously as a consequence of him having a whole new identity. So what that tells me is, is that we can be really smart about this, and I am very proud that there has been bipartisan support around this. I do think that there is a convergence of liberals, conservatives, evangelicals who have terrific prison missions and believe in redemption, libertarians who are concerned about the growth of prison populations, the fiscal conservatives who are concerned about how much all this stuff costs, and it's all coming together.

But the last point I'll make about this is the role of employers. There was, at this same roundtable, this young man who had had a family business for years. And for years, they had hired ex-offenders, very quietly, not as a systematic thing. They—it was a produce and meat wholesaler, and they'd hire guys in. And so this kid, he—who is now running the company, this young man who had inherited the company, he described how when he was growing up, there would always be some big guys around that he'd just took for granted, and it turned out that his dad had hired them as ex-offenders.

And he described how important it was to understand the mentality of somebody who has never had an opportunity to work before in a regular setting. Simple things, like under—the employer has to understand that they may not smile right off the bat because where they've just come from, if you smile, you don't know what might happen to you. And so there's a whole adjustment process in terms of letting your guard down. Talking about how the employer has to make an investment and say: "Look, you need the right kind of shoes, and you need the right clothes for the cooler. And we're going to take this out of your check, but if you're here for 6 months, we'll pay for it." Just all the steps that are taken.

And when an employer ends up being committed like that, what they've discovered is that they will not have a more loyal employee who will go to bat for them, work harder, be more productive, because they've been given a second chance. And so us getting sort of a critical mass of employers who are willing to give that second chance I think has to be part of this whole process.

All right, last question. Go ahead. The—my host for my outstanding Alaska trip. Those of you who have not gone to Alaska, I strongly recommend you go, because it was gorgeous up there. [*Laughter*] Now, I did go during the summer. I don't know what it's like during the winter.

Alaska

Governor William M. Walker of Alaska. Oh, it's even nicer in the winter.

The President. It's a little cold, isn't it?

Gov. Walker. It's even nicer in the winter.

The President. That's what I hear.

Gov. Walker. I just want to quickly thank you and your administration for what you've done in Alaska. During—I've been Governor for 1 year. Every Cabinet member here I have met with so many times, some more than wanted to, that they wanted to—they've been to Alaska. Secretary Moniz, we had lunch in Bethel last week and went out to the village of Oscarville. Mr. President, Alaska was so excited about your unprecedented trip. We get a lot of visits with people that are refueling, and you didn't—well, you did refuel, but you stayed there and came back, that was your destination. What you did with rural Alaska we've never seen before. You brought a hope and excitement there that—and I'm saying, I'm nonpartisan. I can do this. I mean, I'm not, I'm not—I'm the only nonpartisan Governor in the Nation, so I don't have to worry about if I'm picking sides on one or the other. You are as well. Okay. [*Laughter*]

But my question is, I just—I'm going to continue to work with your administration because the doors are always open, we don't always agree. We have a problem. I inherited a similar situation. I've got a deficit that is huge, a $4 billion deficit with a $5.6 billion budget. We're—we've got problems. We have an oil pipeline that's empty. I need to fill it up. There's a lot of oil up there, and we're going to get it safely. And thank you for your—some of your positions you've taken, but we need to put oil in that pipeline. We need access to 1 percent of our national park to be able to do that. So I'm going to continue to work with your administration on Medicaid expansion—it put. I got a—I accepted it unilaterally after the legislature didn't approve or didn't vote. Ten thousand more people have health care, and one law firm has more work because they sued me as a result of that. [*Laughter*] But that's okay, that's another story. [*Laughter*] But thank you very much for what you've done. Thank you.

The President. Well, I appreciate that. And I mean what I say. The—Bill's hospitality up in Alaska was extraordinary. It is a—it fills up your soul being up there, just the landscape and the expanse. The sheer scale of everything is remarkable, and the people could not have been more gracious and wonderful. This goes back to the issue we had talked about earlier in terms of energy. We have encouraged exploration in some areas. There are some areas that are just real sensitive. And one of the ironies when you're up in Alaska—and I mean this sincerely—it shows you that everybody can be two minds about this. I'd have some people say in the same breath, protect this beauty and scenic areas and make sure that nobody is

polluting it, and then, oh, and by the way, let's get going on some oil drilling—at the same time.

And our goal has been to try to balance those equities and to make sure that economic development has taken place in Alaska, that folks are being well served, but that we're also preserving the very thing that makes that place so unique and people care about it so deeply. And I appreciate what you said, though, Bill.

We are always going to work with all of you. And we will put all our cards on the table. My instructions to my Cabinet are, listen, if you can find a way to make something work, make it work. If you can't, at least explain why it is you can't. If we—make sure that it's not just because that's how we've always done things. I don't care how we've always done it in the past; if we can do it smarter this time, let's do it smarter this time. And as a consequence, we've made significant progress with many of you on a number of issues. We can make even more over the next year. And since this will be the last meeting in which I'm addressing all of you, I just want to thank all of you for your service.

Part of the reason we invited the cameras here—usually, when I have Q&A with anybody, we try to restrict the press just so that people feel open and don't feel like if they ask a question that they have to be guarded about it. But the truth is, after so many years of interacting with you, every time we've had a conversation, it's been constructive and useful. And I thought it would actually be useful for the American people to see that the folks in charge aren't always just posturing, they're actually trying to get some work done. You guys are a good model of that.

And my hope is, is that seeps into the broader political debates and conversations that we have. The benefit of being a chief executive, of being a Governor is, is that you can make as many political arguments as you want, but if the stuff doesn't work, people are going to notice. And all of you have taken that to heart, so we appreciate your sacrifice, we appreciate your families' sacrifice, and we look forward to making continued progress in the months to come. And for those of you who are not term limited, good luck. [*Laughter*] All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:29 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Dorothy Brown, Barbara Hawthorne, Mary Jo Nye, Mary Lou Nye, Richard Smith, and Tyler Smith, who were killed in the shootings in Kalamazoo, MI, on February 20; Jason Brian Dalton, suspected gunman in the shootings; Mayor Bobby J. Hopewell and Chief of Public Safety Jeffrey Hadley of Kalamazoo, MI; Sheriff Richard C. Fuller III of Kalamazoo County, MI; Thomas E. Donilon, Chair, and Samuel J. Palmisano, Vice Chair, Commission on Enhancing National Cybersecurity; former Gov. Michael O. Leavitt of Utah; former Secretary of Transportation Raymond H. LaHood; former Secretary of the Interior Kenneth L. Salazar; Gov. Charles D. Baker of Massachusetts; Gov. Margaret Wood Hassan of New Hampshire; Sen. Bernard Sanders; former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts; Madeline Cox Arlea, judge, U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey; U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey Paul J. Fishman; and Essex County, NJ, resident Dquan Rosario, a former participant in the Department of Justice's "Re-New" prisoner reentry program in Newark, NJ. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; and H.R. 644. Gov. McAuliffe referred to Jerry E. Abramson, Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs; and White House Senior Adviser Valerie B. Jarrett. Gov. Hogan referred to Deputy First Class Mark F. Logsdon of the Harford County Sheriff's Department, who was killed in the line of duty in Abingdon, MD, on February 10. Gov. Markell referred to Charles G. Koch, chief executive officer and chairman of the board, and David H. Koch, executive vice president, Koch Industries, Inc.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Libya

February 22, 2016

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13566 of February 25, 2011, with respect to Libya is to continue in effect beyond February 25, 2016.

Colonel Muammar Qadhafi, his government, and close associates took extreme measures against the people of Libya, including by using weapons of war, mercenaries, and wanton violence against unarmed civilians. In addition, there was a serious risk that Libyan state assets would be misappropriated by Qadhafi, members of his government, members of his family, or his close associates if those assets were not protected. The foregoing circumstances, the prolonged attacks, and the increased numbers of Libyans seeking refuge in other countries caused a deterioration in the security of Libya, posed a serious risk to its stability, and led me to declare on February 25, 2011, a national emergency to deal with this threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.

The Libyan Presidency Council, established through the U.N.-facilitated Libyan Political Dialogue, is attempting to form a Government of National Accord (GNA), mitigate threats from spoilers and hardliners, and safely seat itself and its cabinet in Tripoli. Holdouts from the General National Congress continue attempts to exercise authority and compete with the GNA for control of Libya's resources. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant has also established itself in Libya and increased attacks targeting Libyans and their oil infrastructure. Much of the current conflict is over access to Libya's resources, and we run the risk of further destabilization if sanctions do not remain in effect. We continue to encourage Libyans to engage in dialogue, form a GNA, and cease violence. Those that reject dialogue and obstruct and undermine Libya's democratic transition must be held accountable, which is why we worked with the U.N. Security Council to pass United Nations Security Council Resolution 2174 in August 2014 to address threats to Libya's peace, security, and stability. In December 2015, we also worked with the U.N. Security Council to pass United Nations Security Council Resolution 2259 to welcome the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement and demonstrate international support for Libya's political transition process. While we work with the international community to identify those individuals that pose a threat to Libya's democratic transition, we must also continue to ensure that the appropriate sanctions remain in place.

The situation in Libya continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, and we need to protect against the diversion of assets or other abuse by certain members of Qadafi's family and other former regime officials. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Libya.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Supplemental Budget Request To Respond to the Zika Virus
February 22, 2016

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Today, I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed FY 2016 emergency supplemental appropriations request of approximately $1.9 billion to respond to the Zika virus both domestically and internationally. This funding would build upon ongoing preparedness efforts and provide resources for the Departments of Health and Human Services and State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Funding would support immediate response activities to prevent the spread of, prepare for, and respond to Zika virus transmission; fortify domestic public health systems to prevent, detect, and respond to Zika virus transmission; speed research, development, and procurement of vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics; provide emergency assistance to States and the U.S. Territories to combat the virus; provide additional Federal Medicaid funding in Puerto Rico and the other U.S. Territories for health services for pregnant women at risk of infection or diagnosed with Zika virus, and for children with microcephaly, and for other health care costs; and enhance the ability of Zika-affected countries to better combat mosquitoes, control transmission, and support affected populations.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports 50 laboratory-confirmed cases of the Zika virus among U.S. travelers from December 2015–February 5, 2016. In addition, the Pan American Health Organization reports 26 countries and territories in the Americas with local Zika transmission. On February 1, 2016, the World Health Organization declared the Zika virus a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

My foremost priority is to protect the health and safety of Americans. This request supports the necessary steps to fortify our domestic health system, detect and respond to any potential Zika outbreaks at home, and to limit the spread in other countries.

The request includes approximately $1.9 billion to respond to Zika virus transmission across the United States and internationally. In addition, transfer authority is requested to allow for sufficient response and flexibility across the Federal Government to address changing circumstances and emerging needs related to the Zika virus.

My Administration requests that the funding described above be designated as emergency requirements pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended.

I urge the Congress to act expeditiously in considering this important request, the details of which are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks on Closing the Detention Facilities at the United States Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba
February 23, 2016

Good morning, everybody. In our fight against terrorists like Al Qaida and ISIL, we are using every element of our national power: our military; intelligence; diplomacy; homeland security; law enforcement, Federal, State, and local; as well as the example of our ideals as a country that's committed to universal values, including rule of law and human rights. In this fight, we learn and we work to constantly improve. When we find something that works,

we keep on doing it. When it becomes clear that something is not working as intended—when it does not advance our security—we have to change course.

For many years, it's been clear that the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay does not advance our national security, it undermines it. This is not just my opinion. This is the opinion of experts; this is the opinion of many in our military. It's counterproductive to our fight against terrorists, because they use it as propaganda in their efforts to recruit. It drains military resources, with nearly $450 million spent last year alone to keep it running and more than $200 million in additional costs needed to keep it open going forward for less than 100 detainees. Guantanamo harms our partnerships with allies and other countries whose cooperation we need against terrorism. When I talk to other world leaders, they bring up the fact that Guantanamo is not resolved.

Moreover, keeping this facility open is contrary to our values. It undermines our standing in the world. It is viewed as a stain on our broader record of upholding the highest standards of rule of law. As Americans, we pride ourselves on being a beacon to other nations, a model of the rule of law. But 15 years after 9/11, 15 years after the worst terrorist attack in American history, we're still having to defend the existence of a facility and a process where not a single verdict has been reached in those attacks—not a single one.

When I first ran for President, it was widely recognized that this facility needed to close. This was not just my opinion. This was not some radical, far-left view. There was bipartisan support to close it. My predecessor, President Bush, to his credit, said he wanted to close it. It was one of the few things that I and my Republican opponent, Senator John McCain, agreed on.

And so, in one of my first acts as President, I took action to begin closing it. And because we had bipartisan support, I wanted to make sure that we did it right. I indicated that we would need to take our time to do it in a systematic way and that we had examined all the options.

And unfortunately, during that period where we were putting the pieces in place to close it, what had previously been bipartisan support suddenly became a partisan issue. Suddenly, many who previously had said it should be closed backed off because they were worried about the politics. The public was scared into thinking that, well, if we close it, somehow, we'll be less safe. And since that time, Congress has repeatedly imposed restrictions aimed at preventing us from closing this facility.

Now, despite the politics, we've made progress. Of the nearly 800 detainees once held at Guantanamo, more than 85 percent have already been transferred to other countries. More than 500 of these transfers, by the way, occurred under President Bush. Since I took office, we've so far transferred 147 more, each under new, significant restrictions to keep them from returning to the battlefield. And as a result of these actions, today, just 91 detainees remain—less than 100.

Today the Defense Department, thanks to very hard work by Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, as well as his team, working in concert with the Office of Management and Budget, today the Department is submitting to Congress our plan for finally closing the facility at Guantanamo once and for all. It's a plan that reflects the hard work of my entire national security team, so I especially want to thank Ash and his team at DOD. This plan has my full support. It reflects our best thinking on how to best go after terrorists and deal with those who we may capture, and it is a strategy with four main elements.

First, we'll continue to securely and responsibly transfer to other countries the 35 detainees out of the 91 that have already been approved for transfer. Keep in mind, this process involves extensive and careful coordination across our Federal Government to ensure that our national security interests are met when an individual is transferred to another country. So, for example, we insist that foreign countries institute strong security measures. And as we move forward, that means that we will have

around 60 and potentially even fewer detainees remaining.

Second, we'll accelerate the periodic reviews of remaining detainees to determine whether their continued detention is necessary. Our Review Board, which includes representatives from across Government, will continue to look at all relevant information, including current intelligence. And if certain detainees no longer pose a continuing significant threat, they may be eligible for transfer to another country as well.

Number three, we'll continue to use all legal tools to deal with the remaining detainees still held under law of war detention. Currently, 10 detainees are in some stage of the military commissions process, a process that we worked hard to reform in my first year in office with bipartisan support from Congress. But I have to say, with respect to these commissions, they are very costly, they have resulted in years of litigation without a resolution. We're therefore outlining additional changes to improve these commissions, which would require congressional action, and we will be consulting with them in the near future on that issue.

I also want to point out that, in contrast to the commission process, our Article III Federal courts have proven to have an outstanding record of convicting some of the most hardened terrorists. These prosecutions allow for the gathering of intelligence against terrorist groups. It proves that we can both prosecute terrorists and protect the American people. So think about it: Terrorists like Richard Reid, the shoe bomber; Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who tried to blow up an airplane over Detroit; Faisal Shahzad, who put a car bomb in Times Square; and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who bombed the Boston Marathon—they were all convicted in our Article III courts and are now behind bars, here in the United States.

So we can capture terrorists, protect the American people, and when done right, we can try them and put them in our maximum security prisons, and it works just fine. And in this sense, the plan we're putting forward today isn't just about closing the facility at Guantanamo. It's not just about dealing with the current group of detainees, which is a complex piece of business because of the manner in which they were originally apprehended and what happened. This is about closing a chapter in our history. It reflects the lessons that we've learned since 9/11, lessons that need to guide our Nation going forward.

So even as we use military commissions to close out the cases of some current detainees—which, given the unique circumstances of their cases make it difficult for them to be tried in Article III courts—this type of use of military commissions should not set a precedent for the future. As they have been in past wars, military commissions will continue to be an option when individuals are detained during battle. But our preferred option, the most effective option for dealing with individuals detained outside military theaters, must be our strong, proven Federal courts.

Fourth and finally, we're going to work with Congress to find a secure location in the United States to hold remaining detainees. These are detainees who are subject to military commissions, but it also includes those who cannot yet be transferred to other countries or who we've determined must continue to be detained because they pose a continuing significant threat to the United States.

We are not identifying a specific facility today in this plan. We are outlining what options look like. As Congress has imposed restrictions that currently prevent the transfer of detainees to the United States, we recognize that this is going to be a challenge. And we're going to keep making the case to Congress that we can do this is a responsible and secure way, taking into account the lessons and great record of our maximum-security prisons.

And let me point out, the plan we're submitting today is not only the right thing to do for our security, it will also save money. The Defense Department estimates that this plan, compared to keeping Guantanamo open, would lower costs by up to $85 million a year. Over 10 years, it would generate savings of more than $300 million. Over 20 years, the savings would be up to $1.7 billion. In other words, we can ensure our security, uphold our

highest values around the world, and save American taxpayers a lot of money in the process.

So, in closing, I want to say: I am very clear eyed about the hurdles to finally closing Guantanamo. The politics of this are tough. I think a lot of the American public are worried about terrorism, and in their mind, the notion of having terrorists held in the United States rather than in some distant place can be scary. But part of my message to the American people here is, we're already holding a bunch of really dangerous terrorists here in the United States because we threw the book at them. And there have been no incidents. We've managed it just fine.

And, in Congress, I recognize, in part because of some of the fears of the public that have been fanned oftentimes by misinformation, there continues to be a fair amount of opposition to doing closing Guantanamo. If it were easy, it would have happened years ago, as I wanted, as I have been working to try to get done. But there remains bipartisan support for closing it. And given the stakes involved for our security, this plan deserves a fair hearing. Even in an election year, we should be able to have an open, honest, good-faith dialogue about how to best ensure our national security. And the fact that I'm no longer running, Joe is no longer running, we're not on the ballot, it gives us the capacity to not have to worry about the politics.

Let us do what is right for America. Let us go ahead and close this chapter and do it right and do it carefully, do it in a way that makes sure we're safe, but gives the next President and, more importantly, future generations the ability to apply the lessons we've learned in the fight against terrorism and doing it in a way that doesn't raise some of the problems that Guantanamo has raised.

I really think there's an opportunity here for progress. I believe we've got an obligation to try. President Bush said he wanted to close Guantanamo despite everything that he had invested in it. I give him credit for that. There was an honest assessment on his part about what needed to happen. But he didn't get it done, and it was passed to me. I've been working for 7 years now to get this thing closed. As President, I have spent countless hours dealing with this. I do not exaggerate about that. Our closest allies raise it with me continually. They often raise specific cases of detainees repeatedly.

I don't want to pass this problem on to the next President, whoever it is. And if, as a nation, we don't deal with this now, when will we deal with it? Are we going to let this linger on for another 15 years, another 20 years, another 30 years? If we don't do what's required now, I think future generations are going to look back and ask why we failed to act when the right course—the right side of history and of justice and our best American traditions—was clear.

So again, I want to thank Secretary Carter. You and your team did an outstanding job, and you've shown great leadership on this issue. With this plan, we have the opportunity, finally, to eliminate a terrorist propaganda tool, strengthen relationships with allies and partners, enhance our national security, and most importantly, uphold the values that define us as Americans. I'm absolutely committed to closing the detention facility at Guantanamo. I'm going to continue to make the case for doing so for as long as I hold this office. But this is a good moment for everybody to step back, take a look at the facts, take a look at the views of those who have been most committed to fighting terrorism and understand this stuff: our operatives, our intelligence officials, our military. Let's go ahead and get this thing done.

Thanks very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Joe Biden. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks Following a Meeting With King Abdullah II of Jordan and an Exchange With Reporters
February 24, 2016

President Obama. Well, it's wonderful to be back with one of our most stalwart allies in the world, King Abdullah of Jordan, and his delegation. We have had, as usual, an excellent consultation about the enormous challenges that His Majesty and the Jordanian people face in a very difficult time, in a very difficult neighborhood.

We spent the bulk of our discussion around the situation in Syria, Iraq, and our joint efforts to combat ISIL. Jordan has been an outstanding partner in that process. As I've said publicly, we have seen progress in pushing back against ISIL in territory both in Iraq and now in some portions of Syria. But a lot of work remains to be done. And so the coordination between our nations and other coalition partners is absolutely critical. And Jordan has made an enormous contribution. Jordan is a country that punches above its weight when it comes to the fight against ISIL.

With respect to Syria, I briefed him on the conversations that I've had with President Putin and the cessation of hostilities agreement that has been put in place. We are very cautious about raising expectations on this. The situation on ground is difficult, but we have seen modest progress over the course of the last week or so with respect to humanitarian access to populations that are threatened.

If, over the next several weeks, we can see some lessening of the violence that's been wracking that country, then that provides us a basis to build a longer term cease-fire both in the north and the south and allows us to move forward on the political transition that ultimately is going to be necessary to bring an end to the civil war in Syria. It also would allow us, then, to focus all of our efforts—all the parties in the entire world community, including Russia—in going after ISIL, something that right now they are not doing and are not focused on.

We talked about refugees and the burden that Jordan, as well as other countries in the region, are bearing. The Jordanian people have been extraordinarily generous in accommodating the hundreds of thousands of Syrians who have been fleeing the fighting, and the United States is the leading contributor to humanitarian efforts to house and provide basic care to these refugees. But the numbers continue to grow. And I expressed to His Majesty our commitment to make sure that as they continue to be open to helping people in need, they will have a strong partner in the United States, and we will make sure that our money is where our mouth is in terms of looking after these refugee populations.

In addition, I'm proud of the both economic and military assistance that we have consistently provided to Jordan. Considering everything that Jordan is doing essentially for the region and the world and the strains that this has placed their economy under, I think it's important for them to know that the United States is there every step of the way.

Finally, we discussed the situation in Israel and the West Bank and the increasing tensions that exist between Israelis and Palestinians there. His Majesty has been a critical component of reducing some of the immediate sources of tension around the Temple Mount and visits there. But we continue to agree that it's important for us to provide both sides a sense of possibility and hope and not simply despair. That's hard to do. And so we have explored ideas in terms of how we can make progress. But His Majesty has continued to be a voice of reason and moderation and tolerance for all the parties concerned in this issue. And we very much appreciate his partnership in the process.

So we're lucky to have a friend like Jordan. Hopefully, they feel that the United States has been with them during these very difficult times. The good news is, is that, whether it's fighting ISIL, reducing the violence in Syria and trying to get that country on a track for political reconciliation, trying to bring Israelis and Palestinians to recognize their shared interest

in peace, on all these issues, our countries have been in sync. And that will continue as long as I'm President and long after I'm gone, thanks to the leadership of His Majesty.

So appreciate you being here.

King Abdullah. Mr. President, thank you very much for, really, your kind words. I'm delighted to be back here in Washington. And I just wanted to echo the kind words that the President has just said.

We are so grateful for the support that you've shown me and our people, our country. Truly, no country other than the United States has given us so much support, whether it's to the economy so that we can take the challenge of refugees to our country, but also to the military and security so that we can defend our borders, but also secure our people. The help that we've gotten from you, Mr. President, from your administration, and from the Congress and the people of the United States is something that is very difficult to express in any words. And we are very, very grateful for that.

I'm also here to thank the President for his tremendous leadership in dealing with the threat of ISIS—Daesh—specifically when it comes to the challenges in Syria. We are all working together as part of the international team to try to find, as the President said, a political solution. Yet, at the same time, the threat of Daesh is one that has taken some of our consultations today on how do we defeat Daesh as quickly as possible, not only in Syria, but also to reach out to our Iraqi brethrens to make sure that they too are part of this struggle against extremism.

I do think that we are moving in the right direction. The coordination with the United States is exceptional. And again, I'd like to thank you, sir, and all your institutions for working very closely with us in this respect.

So I'm actually leaving Washington very optimistic about the level of support from the United States, the leadership that the President has shown on the issue of Syria. And hopefully, the discussions between yourselves and the Russians will move the process in the right direction. But also looking at the larger picture, when we're looking at the challenge of ISIS and their franchises around the world, I think that the future looks much better with the leadership of the United States.

We did, again, as the President said, speak about bringing hope to the Israelis and Palestinians. These are obviously challenging times, but hope is something that we have to bring both sides. And we did talk about this issue and to see what we can do in 2016 to bring the momentum into the right direction.

But I actually am here just to thank the President and the American people for all the support they've given for our country and how truly grateful I am for your leadership, sir, for your support to me and my people. Thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you. All right.

Supreme Court Nomination Process

Q. Mr. President, can you respond to Mitch McConnell's comments yesterday about your Supreme Court choices and the fact that they're not planning on holding a hearing whatsoever?

President Obama. Well, the Constitution says that I nominate candidates for the Supreme Court when there's a vacancy and that the Senate exercises its constitutional role in advise and consent. I'm going to do my job. We are going to go through a process, as we have done in two previous Supreme Court vacancies, to identify an outstanding candidate that has impeccable legal credentials and would bring the kind of ability and compassion and objectivity and legal reasoning to the Court that the highest Court in the land demands.

Once I've made a nomination, then Leader McConnell and all the Members of the Senate are going to make a decision about how do they fulfill their constitutional responsibilities. I recognize the politics are hard for them, because the easier thing to do is to give in to the most extreme voices within their party and stand pat and do nothing. But that's not our job. Our job is to fulfill our constitutional duties.

And so my hope and expectation is that once there is an actual nominee, once this is no longer an abstraction, that those on the Judiciary

Committee recognize that their job is to give this person a hearing, to show the courtesy of meeting with them. They are then free to vote whatever their conscience dictates as to whether this person is qualified or not. In the meantime, the American people are going to have the ability to gauge whether the person I've nominated is well within the mainstream, is a good jurist, is somebody who's worthy to sit on the Supreme Court.

And I think it will be very difficult for Mr. McConnell to explain how, if the public concludes that this person is very well qualified, that the Senate should stand in the way simply for political reasons. We'll see what happens. And I think the situation may evolve over time. I don't expect Mitch McConnell to say that is the case today. I don't expect any member of the Republican caucus to stick their head out at the moment and say that. But let's see how the public responds to the nominee that we put forward.

The one thing I think is important to dispel is any notion that somehow this is some well-established tradition or some constitutional principle that a President in his last year of office cannot fill a Supreme Court vacancy. It's not in the text of the Constitution. Ironically, these are Republicans who say they believe in reading the text of the Constitution and focusing on the intent of the Constitution. But none of the Founding Fathers thought that when it comes to the President carrying out his duties, he should do it for 3 years and then on the last year stop doing it.

That—there's an argument that, well, the President shouldn't do this because he is a lame duck. Well, the truth of the matter is, is that traditionally the term "lame duck" refers to the 2 or 3 months after an election has taken place in which a new President is about to be sworn in. I've got a year to go. I don't think they would approve of me abdicating on my duties to—as Commander in Chief and to stop doing all the other work that I've got to do. Well, this is part of my job.

There's been arguments that for 80 years this has been the tradition. Well, that's not the case. Justice Kennedy was approved after being nominated by Ronald Reagan in Ronald Reagan's last year of office. They say, well, that's different because he had been nominated in 1987, even if he was confirmed—or '85—even if he was confirmed in '86. Well, the notion that there is some 2-month period in which suddenly it all flips and everything shuts down, that's not a credible argument.

What other arguments are they making? They suggest that, well, there have been a couple of times where Democrats said it would be wise for a President not to nominate someone. First of all, we know Senators say stuff all the time. Second of all, these were comments that were made where there was no actual nomination at stake. It—so it has no application to actual—the actual situation that we have right now.

I'm trying to think of any other reeds that they're grasping here as to why they would not carry out their duties. And I can't really think of one.

I recognize that this is an important issue for their constituencies, and it's particularly sensitive because this was Justice Scalia's seat that is now vacant and that a whole host of decisions on the Supreme Court could turn on this ninth Justice and their vote.

But that's how our democracy is supposed to work. And what I do—the last point I'll make—we have already seen a breakdown of the judicial appointment process that gets worse and worse each and every year, each and every Congress. It becomes harder and harder to get any candidates for the judiciary confirmed. We saw Senator Reid have to employ what—the so-called nuclear option because there was such a logjam in terms of getting judicial appointments through.

If in fact the Republicans in the Senate take a posture that defies the Constitution, defies logic, is not supported by tradition simply because of politics, then invariably what you're going to see is a further deterioration in the ability of any President to make any judicial appointments. And appointments to the Supreme Court as well as the Federal bench suddenly become a complete extension of our polarized politics.

And at that point, not only are you going to see more and more vacancies and the court systems break down, but the credibility of the Court itself begins to diminish because it's viewed simply as an extension of our politics—this is a Republican judge or this is a Democratic judge, as opposed to, this is a Supreme Court Justice who is supposed to be standing above the day-to-day politics that take place.

So I understand the posture that they're taking right now. I get the politics of it. I'm sure they're under enormous pressure from their base and their constituencies around this issue. I've talked to many of them, and I've told them I'm sympathetic. And by the way, there's not a lot of vigor when they defend the position that they're taking: that they wouldn't even meet, for example, with a Supreme Court nominee. They're pretty sheepish about it when they make those comments.

So we'll see how this plays itself out. But I'm going to do my job. I'm going to nominate somebody and let the American people decide as to whether that person is qualified. And if they are qualified, let the American people decide whether there's enough time for the U.S. Senate to hold hearings and have a vote. It's not as if, from what I see, the Senate calendar is so full that we don't have time to get this done.

All right? Thank you, guys.

Syria

Q. Your Majesty, I was going to ask you about——

President Obama. Yes, please go ahead.

Q. Nadia Bilbassy with Al Arabiya. In the light of the Syria accord and the cessation of hostility, how do you envision the next step in terms of fighting ISIS and pursuing a political career? And if I may, can you describe the current cooperation and coordination with the United States, considering the riseing challenges and crises in the Middle East?

King Abdullah. Well, I mean, as I said earlier on, the relationship and coordination with the United States is outstanding. And one of the reasons we're here is to make sure that we're taking the coordination between our two countries to the next level.

As to what is happening in Syria, obviously, the political process is, I think, the priority at the moment. And we're all supportive of what John Kerry and Sergey Lavrov are doing as part of the political process, but at the same time, making sure that the second part of that dimension is the fight against ISIS and Daesh. And I think that both elements are complementary to each other.

Specifically, obviously, to the southern part of Syria, is whether or not, based in connection to what the Americans and the Russians are doing, can we get a cease-fire going into the south alongside our border as part of a building block of the political process that helps move the politics of this issue forward between the regime and opposition forces? Because at the end of the day, Daesh is the enemy for all of us. And we'll have to see how things are moving between the two Foreign Ministers.

But again, we've got some good initiatives moving in that, and we're just keeping our fingers crossed that the political process continues to move in the right direction. And so far, I think things are——

President Obama. We'll see.

King Abdullah. We'll have to keep our fingers crossed.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known as ISIS or Daesh.

Remarks on Signing the Judicial Redress Act of 2015
February 24, 2016

Well, I want to congratulate the Members of Congress who are standing behind me here today. The bill I'm about to sign is entitled the Judicial Redress Act bill. And what it does in the simplest terms is makes sure that everybody's data is protected in the strongest possible way with our privacy laws: not only American citizens, but also foreign citizens.

We take our privacy seriously. And along with our commitment to innovation, one—that's one of the reasons that global companies and entrepreneurs want to do business here. We enforce our privacy laws, unlike a number of other countries. And in fact, just this month, we finished a landmark new agreement called the Privacy Shield, which provides tough new protections to safeguard consumer data, and it gives certainty to thousands of businesses representing hundreds of billions of dollars in trade.

And we've also established the first Privacy Council to strengthen protections of people's personal information and privacy rights across the Federal Government. And we've put new laws and policies in place that clarify what we do and what we do not do when it comes to people's data and our intelligence efforts.

The Members of Congress who are here, they have been leaders in these efforts. It is bipartisan. I want to thank Members both in the House and the Senate who worked so hard on it. And I think this is one more step in what is this evolving process, as we get deep into the Information Age, to make sure that even as we protect America's security, we're also mindful of the privacy that we cherish so much.

So with that, I'm going to sign the bill. Thank you, everybody, for doing a great job on this.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:39 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. H.R. 1428, approved February 24, was assigned Public Law No. 114–126.

Remarks on Signing the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015
February 24, 2016

Well, trade is a major topic of debate here in the United States and around the world. One area where there should be no debate is that once we've set up trade rules, people have to abide by them. We can't have other countries cheating. We can't have other countries engaged in practices that disadvantage American workers and American businesses.

One of the things I've very proud of is that we have ramped up enforcement of our trade laws to protect American workers and American businesses like never before. In areas like steel, for example, we've brought more cases than we had in the previous decade. We've brought more cases before the World Trade Organization, the WTO, than any other administration. And the ones that we've brought, we have won. In fact, we just won a case against India this week.

And so it is timely, then, for us to be signing this bipartisan customs bill, because it's an important milestone in our trade agenda. I want to thank all the Members of Congress who stand behind me here and worked on this diligently. It was a hard piece of business, but what it does is it helps us enforce our trade agreements by providing more resources for enforcement, by streamlining the process whereby we can bring an action if a country is illegally dumping goods or involved in countervailing duties. It makes sure that these other countries are playing by the rules, and it gives us more personnel to do it as well.

I also want to thank Senator Bennet in particular, because he gives us new tools—the provision that he helped to craft in this legislation gives us new tools to deal with currency devaluations that are designed to undercut

U.S. goods, U.S. exports, and our balance of trade. This strengthens our ability to penalize countries that fail to live up to their obligations. And overall, this is an example of smart trade policy in the 21st century.

We are not going to be able to close our borders. The global supply chain is deeply embedded in everything we do, and our exports produce jobs for Americans in every State that typically pay higher than nonexport jobs. So we want to trade. And we've got the best workers, we've got the best businesses, we make the best products and provide the best services. In order for us to make sure, though, that we're getting the benefits of trade, we've got to have these enforcement tools, and this legislation helps us accomplish this.

So I want to thank all of you for the great work that you have done. And I expect our Customs and Border patrol—which just brought some additional cases today with respect to steel—I expect them to use these tools wisely to make sure that we're getting the job done. All right?

And with that, I'm going to sign the bill.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

There you go. Thank you very much, everybody. Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:49 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. H.R. 644, approved February 24, was assigned Public Law No. 114–125.

Statement on Signing the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015
February 24, 2016

Today I have signed into law H.R. 644, the "Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015," an Act that is an important milestone to the overall U.S. trade agenda and that will help our workers and businesses to compete fairly with the rest of the world. This bipartisan piece of legislation will strengthen trade enforcement at our ports, improve our ability to combat evasion of our enforcement actions, and improve transparency, accountability, and coordination in enforcement efforts. It also provides unprecedented new measures to address unfair currency practices by establishing a process that directs the executive branch to confront countries that engage in such practices and to impose penalties on countries that fail to remedy these issues.

The Act provides new tools and authorities for U.S. companies and workers to more effectively hold our trading partners accountable—now and into the future—and press for the investigation of cases of duty evasion. Antidumping and countervailing duty (AD/CVD) orders are a critical tool for cracking down on unfair competition by trading partners and companies that put American workers and businesses, such as in the steel industry, at a disadvantage. The Act will allow U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the Department of Commerce to more effectively enforce AD/CVD orders and allow CBP to act more quickly to prevent importers from evading AD/CVD orders on unfairly traded imports of steel and other products. The Act will also improve communication between U.S. Government agencies and the private sector over how duty evasion investigations are proceeding, heighten accountability throughout the enforcement process, and more effectively counter attempts at duty evasion. It also enhances CBP efforts to combat the import of counterfeit goods and protect intellectual property rights holders and streamlines CBP operations by establishing the CBP Centers of Excellence and Expertise to enforce compliance and facilitate the flow of legitimate trade, thereby increasing U.S. competitiveness. And, it eliminates a provision that previously allowed some imports into the United States made, in whole or in part, with forced labor, including child labor.

The Act also provides tools to hold accountable trading partners that violate their trade obligations. The Act permanently establishes

the Interagency Center on Trade Implementation, Monitoring, and Enforcement at the office of the United States Trade Representative, codifying the successor to the Interagency Trade Enforcement Center (ITEC) that was created by Executive Order in 2012. This Center will bring together expertise from across the Federal Government into one organization that will build on the crucial research and analytical work currently being done by ITEC to investigate potential trade enforcement disputes. Additionally, the Act provides my Administration with new tools to enhance engagement with countries that do not adequately and effectively protect intellectual property rights. My Administration looks forward to working with the Congress on the most effective way to use these new tools.

Provisions of the Act address trade with Israel. I have directed my Administration to strongly oppose boycotts, divestment campaigns, and sanctions targeting the State of Israel. As long as I am President, we will continue to do so. Certain provisions of this Act, by conflating Israel and "Israeli-controlled territories," are contrary to longstanding bipartisan United States policy, including with regard to the treatment of settlements. Moreover, consistent with longstanding constitutional practice, my Administration will interpret and implement the provisions in the Act that purport to direct the Executive to seek to negotiate and enter into particular international agreements (section 414(a)(1)) or to take certain positions in international negotiations with respect to international agreements with foreign countries not qualifying for trade authorities procedures (sections 108(b), 414(a)(2), 415, and 909(c)) in a manner that does not interfere with my constitutional authority to conduct diplomacy.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 24, 2016.

NOTE: H.R. 644, approved February 24, was assigned Public Law No. 114–125.

Message to the Congress on Modifying and Continuing the National Emergency With Respect to Cuba and Continuing To Authorize the Regulation of the Anchorage and Movement of Vessels
February 24, 2016

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 1 of title II of Public Law 65–24, ch. 30, June 15, 1917, as amended (50 U.S.C. 191), sections 201, 202, and 301 of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*), and section 301 of title 3, United States Code, I hereby report that I have issued a Proclamation to modify and continue the national emergency declared in Proclamations 6867 and 7757.

The Proclamation recognizes that certain descriptions of the national emergency set forth in Proclamations 6867 and 7757 no longer reflect the international relations of the United States related to Cuba. Further, the Proclamation recognizes the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, and that the United States continues to pursue the progressive normalization of relations while aspiring toward a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic Cuba.

The Proclamation clarifies the national emergency related to Cuba and specifically provides the following statements related to U.S. national security and foreign policy:

- It is U.S. policy that a mass migration from Cuba would endanger the security of the United States by posing a disturbance or threatened disturbance of the international relations of the United States.

- The unauthorized entry of vessels subject to the jurisdiction of the United States into Cuban territorial waters is in violation of U.S. law and contrary to U.S. policy.
- The unauthorized entry of U.S.-registered vessels into Cuban territorial waters is detrimental to U.S. foreign policy, and counter to the purpose of Executive Order 12807, which is to ensure, among other things, safe, orderly, and legal migration.
- The possibility of large-scale unauthorized entries of U.S.-registered vessels would disturb the international relations of the United States by facilitating a possible mass migration of Cuban nationals.

I have directed the Secretary of Homeland Security (the "Secretary") to make and issue such rules and regulations as the Secretary may find appropriate to regulate the anchorage and movement of vessels, and authorize and approve the Secretary's issuance of such rules and regulations, as authorized by the Act of June 15, 1917.

I am enclosing a copy of the Proclamation I have issued.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 24, 2016.

NOTE: The proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at PBS's "A Tribute to Ray Charles: In Performance at the White House"

February 24, 2016

The President. Thank you, everybody. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, good evening, everybody

Audience members. Good evening!

The President. And welcome to the White House.

Over the past 7 years, Michelle and I have set aside nights like this to honor the music that shaped America: classical and country, blues and Broadway, gospel and Motown, the women of soul and the sounds of the civil rights movement. This has become one of our most cherished traditions, and I want to thank PBS for helping us to put on these wonderful events.

Tonight is a little bittersweet because this marks our final "In Performance at the White House."

Audience members. Aww!

The President. I will not be singing. [*Laughter*] But for our last one, it is fitting that we pay tribute to one of our favorites, and one of the most brilliant and influential musicians of our times: the late, great genius himself, Mr. Ray Charles.

I want to thank the Smithsonian for their support. And I want to thank the members of Ray Charles's family who are here with us tonight. It is a great honor to have you here.

Ray Charles Robinson's childhood in the segregated South was marked by poverty and tragedy. Early in his life, he watched his younger brother drown, lost his eyesight, and lost his father. But Ray had two things going for him. One was a strong mother, Aretha, who insisted that her son not wallow in self-pity, but master self-sufficiency. And two, he had music.

As Ray once put it, "I was born with music inside of me." A local cafe owner introduced him to the piano, and at the St. Augustine School of the Blind and Deaf, he studied the saxophone, the clarinet, and trumpet as well. He learned how to read, write, and arrange music in Braille. And he was exposed to a wide range of styles, all of which he loved, from gospel to the blues, from Chopin to Art Tatum. At night, like so many others, he would turn his radio dial to the Grand Ole Opry.

When his mother passed, Ray left school. He took whatever gigs came along. But when he met another young man named Quincy Jones,

everything changed. "Ray came to town, lit it up like a rocket," Quincy said. "He had it. Whatever it is, Ray had it." And everyone knew it.

Throughout the fifties, Ray fused jazz, gospel, and blues into a new soul sound. As he put it: "Gospel and the blues are almost the same thing. It's just a question of whether you're talkin' about a woman or God." [*Laughter*] And with his touring band, including his iconic backup singers, Raelettes, he recorded some of the biggest hits ever, including "What'd I Say" and "Hit the Road Jack."

Now, in those days, Black musicians were expected to play in the Jim Crow South. But in 1961—the year I was born—Ray refused to play for a segregated audience in Augusta, Georgia. He was sued for breach of contract, but he continued boycotting segregated venues and became an active supporter of the civil rights movement.

On stage and in the studio, Ray did it all: jazz, R&B, rock and roll, pop. He even helped to bring the country music he loved to a broader audience. But whatever genre of music he was playing, there was no mistaking his singular sound: that virtuoso piano playing that matched that one-of-a-kind voice. Even as a young man, he had the rich, raw honey tone of an old soul. No matter the feeling—whether it was love, longing, or loss—Ray Charles had the rare ability to collapse our weightiest emotions into a single note. And from the tiny clubs in which he started out to the arenas that he eventually filled, Ray was an electrifying performer. He couldn't see us, but we couldn't take our eyes off of him.

Chart-topping hits, 17 Grammy Awards, a spot in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, beating Willie Nelson at chess—[*laughter*]—his accolades are too many to name. But perhaps his greatest achievement was in showing all of us that it is our incredible diversity of music, a chorus of cultures and of styles, that truly makes "America the Beautiful."

To see Ray's legacy, you don't have to look far. It lives on in the countless musicians he influenced, including the ones here with us tonight. Yolanda Adams. Leon Bridges. Andra Day. Anthony Hamilton. Brittany Howard. Demi Lovato. Sam Moore. Jussie Smollett. The Band Perry. Usher. And we've got Rickey Minor conducting the Christian McBride Big Band, using some of Ray's actual arrangements. And let me tell you, these guys can play anything, and they play it well.

So I'm going to stop talking, because with 17 pieces—the same number of instruments as Ray's band—this might be the biggest band to ever to play the White House other than the Marine Band. [*Laughter*] Are you ready? Me too. Hold onto your seats and enjoy the show.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:05 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to musicians Quincy D. Jones, Jr., Willie Nelson, and Usher T. Raymond IV.

Remarks During a Panel Discussion on Precision Medicine
February 25, 2016

The Atlantic Senior Editor James Hamblin. I want to get things started by asking you, Mr. President, to kick things off. You've been talking about precision medicine since 2005, but a lot of us are still new to it. So could you fill us in on the background and what brings us here today?

The President. Well, this is an incredibly exciting time in medicine generally and the biological sciences. And a lot of this traces back to the incredible progress that we've made with the human genome—oops, I'm sorry, my mike. I've got to talk with a mike. [*Laughter*] We've made less progress when it comes to the audio sciences. [*Laughter*]

Let me start again. This is an extraordinarily exciting time for medicine and the biological sciences, and a lot of this traces back to the work that was done in mapping out the human genome, which was an enormous endeavor. There are some people here in the room who were involved in that process, including our

own head of the NIH, Francis Collins. And at the time, it was enormously expensive for us to do that. With the advance of computers, Big Data, we are now seeing a rapid acceleration in making that process cheaper. It is spurring on a whole new set of understandings about how diseases operate, how the human body, how cells operate, how areas like cancer show that each cancer may be unique, even if it's in the same organ.

And so all these insights promise the possibility of us being able to cure diseases that, up until now, we couldn't figure out. We could oftentimes, with real blunt instruments, treat, but it was very ineffective or, in some cases at least, inefficient. And what we're now seeing is the possibility of us identifying diseases, targeting them, individualizing treatments for a particular patient, and operating with the kind of precision that promises to reduce costs, provide much better care, make our entire health care system much more effective.

And the key to all this is for us to be able to build up databases. And because all of us potentially could have electronic medical records that voluntarily—with strong privacy protections—we pool together so that researchers, practitioners, scientists can share, we may be able to accelerate the process of discovering cures in ways that we've never seen before.

And our Precision Medicine Initiative has been designed to get all these various building blocks brought together so that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts; so that, for example, the VA, which has been gathering genomic data on a large number of our men and women who have served this country in order to serve them better within the VA system, can they then connect with researchers at a particular university who are focused on a particular disease? And can we use Big Data to accelerate the research process much more rapidly?

Those kinds of opportunities are there. And the good news is, is that over the course of the last year that we made this announcement about PMI, or Precision Medicine Initiative, what we've seen is huge interest from the private sector, from the public sector, from the non-for-profit sector, from the medical community, from researchers. And today what we're able to announce is that 40 more organizations, or a large number of other organizations are joining us in this process. There are a whole new set of initiatives that are going to help to drive this even faster.

And my hope is that this becomes the foundation, the architecture whereby 10 years from now we can look back and say that we have revolutionized medicine in areas like cancer or Alzheimer's or some of the diseases that cause so much pain and suffering for so many families all across the country. And there's no better place to do it than the United States of America, where innovation and R&D has been the hallmark of driving not only our economy, but the improvements that we've seen in the life expectancy and the quality of life for people all around the world.

Dr. Hamblin. Thank you. I want to go now—[*applause*]—please. So I want to start by talking about some successes we've had from people on the panel in the realm of precision medicine and then go to some of the challenges that we face moving forward, starting with Sonia. So several years ago, your mother was diagnosed with a rare prion disease and passed away. The disease is known as fatal familial insomnia. You have essentially devoted your life to making that name obsolete. You chose to get tested yourself for the gene. How have you been motivated to be so proactive?

Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard student Sonia Vallabh. It's a great question. I would say deciding to get tested once I learned that my mom had died of a genetic disease and that I was at 50–50 risk of inheriting the same fate, which was midlife onset, very rapid neurodegenerative decline. These diseases are always fatal; they are currently untreatable. Once I had that knowledge in my hand—and these decisions were all made hand-in-hand with my husband Eric, who's here today—for the two of us, the decision to pursue testing and resolve that doubt was clear. We made that decision instantaneously. Because we knew there was no going back to a time before we knew about our risk. So we wanted to know what we were up against.

What I couldn't have predicted is what would happen next. So, as you mentioned, I'd been trained as a lawyer; Eric had been trained as a city planner and engineer. And I don't think either of us went into the test with a vision of how it was going to change our lives one way or the other. But when we came out with that positive test report, my life broke into two pieces. Right—there was before, and there was after.

And what happened after is that we set about trying to learn everything we could about these diseases. And like everyone looking for answers, we started with Google. We started with Wikipedia. [*Laughter*] We read what we could find on the Internet. We read papers. We called up researchers out of the blue; some of them were kind enough to take our calls. We started attending conferences. We started blogging. And eventually, we changed jobs. And 4 years later, we're both Ph.D. students at Harvard Medical School. And day to day, we work side-by-side in Stuart Schreiber's lab at the Broad Institute in Cambridge. And there we're devoting ourselves to developing treatments for these diseases.

I'm so proud to be doing this. But I have to say we've been just immensely lucky. The Broad Institute has basically adopted us. We have had some brilliant people take risks on us, like Eric Lander, who advises the President on science, sometimes advises us too—[*laughter*]—amazingly. Amazingly. But even with the best people backing us, there is no guarantee that we will be successful in my lifetime, right? We are running this race day by day, and we still have to see where it takes us.

[*At this point, Ms. Vallabh continued her remarks, concluding as follows.*]

I think we do ourselves a disservice by clinging to names that obscure the mechanism of these diseases and the things that unite patients with, quote, unquote, "different" diseases that have flown under different names for many decades. So I think of us as patients with genetic prion disease, and I think that is the patient cohort that I identify with. And those are the people who I want to help.

Preventive Medicine

Dr. Hamblin. So once—while you're studying a disease that affects one—a hundred people worldwide, you're also studying this entire mechanism that can tie in to many diseases as people continue to share their data and their experience.

Ms. Vallabh. Absolutely.

The President. I know that you're supposed to go next, but I'm going to hijack this——

Dr. Hamblin. Please.

The President. ——just for one second. [*Laughter*] It's—we're in my house. [*Laughter*] I—but there's something that I should have mentioned that Sonia's story, I think, highlights, and that is, so often, what we label as a health care system is actually more of a disease care system in which the patient is passive, you wait until you get sick, a bunch of experts then help you solve it. And one of the promises of precision medicine is not just identifying—or giving researchers and medical practitioners tools to help cure people, it is also empowering individuals to monitor and take a more active role in their own health.

Now, in Sonia's case, obviously, there's a very particular genetic variant that she's got to worry about. And the extraordinary strength and tenacity that she brings to this makes me really optimistic that she's going to help drive for a cure in this particular area. But for many people who may not have such a clear, specific concern, may still have genetic variants that alter how you think about your blood pressure, your likelihood for diabetes, a whole range of other disease—potential markers that if we get this right, if we do precision medicine well, and we get that information, that data to consumers, gives them the ability to stay healthy for long periods of time. And that's hugely promising.

And it's good for those individuals; it's good for society, generally, because it will save on a whole lot of health care costs if we can prevent diseases from manifesting themselves in the first place.

Sorry to interrupt.

Dr. Hamblin. Not, it's—[*laughter*].

The President. But it's an important point.

Dr. Hamblin. It's a perfect segue to Howard, who is working not just as a patient advocate, because your own daughter was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, but in terms of data sharing, you have worked to create a platform for data sharing. And you recently built for your daughter a pancreas, which is especially impressive for someone with no training in the medical sciences. [*Laughter*] How did you manage that? [*Laughter*]

Tidepool President, Chief Executive Officer, and Founder Howard Look. No training required. [*Laughter*] It turns out, I'm a geek dad. And when my daughter was diagnosed in 2011, the first thing I realized was, wow, here are these medical devices, a continuous glucose monitor that measures her blood glucose every 5 minutes, an insulin pump that delivers a deadly hormone which, you walk this tightrope when you have type 1 diabetes of just a little too much insulin and you can have a seizure or go into a coma, or even 1 in 20 people, unfortunately, will die over the course of their lifetime from nocturnal hypoglycemia, or too much insulin while they sleep. And what I realized was we just couldn't get the data out of the devices easily enough.

[*Mr. Look continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

I put one of these together for my daughter. There are many other people who put it together for themself. And what it means is that she gets those precise doses of insulin in a much safer and much more effective way. So basically, what happened is, by liberating the data from the device, we were able to come up with a much better way to deliver therapy. And I think it just shows the power of engaged patients and how important it is to liberate the data, not just electronic health record data, but also device data, right? Patients with type 1 diabetes shouldn't have to outsmart the very companies that they depend on for these lifesaving devices, and I think that's what we've seen the community do.

Dr. Hamblin. And I want to move to Dr. Linehan. You have been for decades doing research in renal cancers. And when you trained as a urological surgeon, there was only one disease, kidney cancer—had the same treatment. And you came in and said that "this isn't working, these are different diseases," half of which you basically discovered yourself. You were doing precision medicine before it was cool. [*Laughter*] How—I mean, what led you to that? What was your moment of saying we need—something needs to change?

National Cancer Institute Urologic Oncology Branch Chief W. Marston Linehan. It was very easy in a way. As you said, I'm a urologic surgeon, so if a patient comes to me with a small kidney tumor, we can cure 95 percent of those patients. But if they came, certainly, 34 years ago when we started, with advanced disease, 82 percent of them died within 24 months.

[*Dr. Linehan continued his remarks. Dr. Hamblin then asked several follow-up questions, and Dr. Linehan responded, concluding as follows.*]

Dr. Linehan. I think every different tumor is—I don't want to say is going to be a fight to the death each one, but just about. I mean, each gene pathway for the different cancers could potentially have a different strategy. So it takes—this is, we say to ourselves and to our patients, this is a marathon, it's not a sprint.

Digital Health Records/Medical Research

Dr. Hamblin. So the question that raises in my mind, then, is how does that not become an exorbitant cost when pharmaceutical companies need to move away from a drug that can treat many people to drugs that are treating small groups of people, just as a matter of scale and production, research and development?

The President. Well, what the doctor is identifying, I think, is the fact that we're just in the infancy of all this. We're just beginning to understand at the molecular level, at the genetic level, what exactly is happening in various diseases.

And the goal of the Precision Medicine Initiative is to figure out how to break down some

of the structural or institutional barriers that prevent us from making the big leaps over the next several years. So I'll just give you a couple of examples.

With respect to being able to map out what's happening with these different diseases and what are the genetic similarities, what are the differences, why are some people doing okay with it, why are people not, the more samples we have, the more data we have, the more we're going to be able to learn. Part of the problem we have right now is, is that every patient's data is siloed: It's in a hospital here, a hospital there, a doctor here, a lab there. And so the goal here is, if we can pool and create a common database of ultimately a million people that's diverse so that they have a lot of genetic variation, we can now take a disease that may be relatively rare, but because we have a pretty large sample size and start seeing patterns that we might not have seen before.

But a couple things that requires: It requires, first of all, us understanding who owns the data. Right? And I would like to think that if somebody take—does a test on me or my genes, that that's mine. But that's not always how we define these issues, right? So there's some legal issues involved.

In terms of the model that we use for health records that, hopefully, will be digitalized more and more, companies help hospitals keep and collect that data. And they should get paid for that. It's—they're building software; they're building an infrastructure. On the other hand, we don't want that data just trapped. So if I am sick and voluntarily I want to join with other people who have a similar disease than mine and donate our data to help accelerate cures, I've got to be able to work with the electronic health record companies to make sure that I can do that easily. Right? And there may be some commercial resistance to that that we have to talk about, although we're seeing some terrific participation now—and that's part of what we're announcing—of those companies in terms of helping that happen.

There's privacy issues. We've got to figure out how do we make sure that if I donate my data to this big pool that it's not going to be misused, that it's not going to be commercialized in some way that I don't know about. And so we've got to set up a series of structures that make me confident that if I'm making that contribution to science that I'm not going to end up getting a bunch of spam—[*laughter*]—targeting people who have a particular disease I may have.

And so across the board, what you're—what we're trying to do is just make sure that all the various players in the health care system, including the researchers themselves, are invested in us building this broader capacity. Because this can potentially also change how we do research. Right now what happens is, the best researchers and the best universities, oftentimes they're kind of hoarding their samples——

Dr. Hamblin. No.

The President. ——because—apparently—I'm not a researcher, but that's—[*laughter*].

Ms. Vallabh. Never too late, Mr. President. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes, good point. It's a good point. I don't think I'm as smart as you are, so—[*laughter*]—the transition may be difficult, but——

Mr. Look. You could try software. [*Laughter*]

The President. Right. But my understanding is, is that the basic model of research at universities is having your samples, that's really valuable because that's how you get grants. And on the other hand, if we've got a million samples that are accessible to researchers from all across the country and all around the world, and they're all able to at least shorten the lines of inquiry and collapse them so that they can eliminate those things that are less likely to work and pursue those things that are more likely to work before you start getting into the more detailed aspects of the research, that ends up being a cost saver.

Now, you're identifying one last point, which is something that we're—we've got to have some big brains out here figure out, and that is the economics of treatment. Because right now, if you have a big, blockbuster drug, it may work really well for this individual, not so well for that individual. In the aggregate, it

works pretty well, and as a consequence, it gets prescribed a lot and the drug company can make a lot of money. If it turns out that we start knowing that it really works well for you, but it doesn't work well for Francis—Francis is no longer buying it—[*laughter*]—and we now have a smaller group of potential customers, and so there may be some pause in terms of making that investment.

And what we have to be able to do is to think about—much in the same way that we have to think about vaccines, and right now we're working—we just had a meeting about Zika, where we actually think there's a promising pathway for diagnostics and vaccines on this. It's not a real complicated virus, apparently, but how do we figure out a production cycle that makes sense. We're going to have to make some decisions.

And this is where Senator Lamar Alexander, who is taking great interest in this—this is going to be part of the legislative process that we've got to think about. Are there ways where the Government says we step in—not to pay for every drug, but there may be areas where we subsidize drugs that are really effective for a small group of people, and there ends up being some cross-subsidies with other drugs, we create markets. There's a whole bunch of complicated questions that we're going to have to answer.

The point though—the final point I'll make is, over the long term, we can save a lot of money, rather than make this more expensive, if every drug we prescribe actually works. [*Laughter*] If the doctor with his kidney patient knows that this is not going to work, and that's not going to work, he's not going to be wasting a huge amount of time, effort, surgery, et cetera, on a path that's less likely to succeed. He's going to be saving money and focusing entirely on those pathways that we know are going to work.

Opioid Addiction

Dr. Hamblin. Can I piggy-back on that and note that CDC announced last month that 47,000 Americans died in 2014 of drug overdoses, the majority of which were opioids. That number has doubled since 2000. Do you see a role for precision medicine in addressing that, what they're calling an epidemic?

The President. Well, it's a complicated question. Part of the problem that we have with the opioid epidemic is that, in 85 percent of rural communities, we don't have mental health or drug treatment facilities.

So I want to make sure people understand, precision medicine is not a replacement for making sure people have just basic health care. [*Laughter*] And we have to make sure that that's still in place. But we don't yet know the genetic basis for addiction, for example, in ways that we may discover 10 years from now or 15 years from now. And so it could end up having an impact.

I think, short term, the opioid problem really has more to do with the fact that a lot of people don't have basic health care. They put off getting help on pain management. The easiest way to do it initially is just to get some pills; the pills run out, and then, sadly, it turns out that heroin is a cheaper way to refill your prescription and people are getting hooked.

So I think that's actually a different category of problem. But what it does speak to is the fact that the more we know about how to treat a particular problem, the more effectively we treat that problem; over time, the more efficient and cost-effective the health care system will be.

Medical Regulatory Reform/Medical Research

Dr. Hamblin. Can I turn to Sonia and Howard, who are—this will be my final question—talking about barriers to sharing. You've both been very open advocates for donating data. What has—how do you encourage people to donate data and feel safe about it and understand the importance? And what are the barriers to people feeling safe about that going forward?

Ms. Vallabh. I think it continues to be a challenge, in the sense that we've come a long way. I'm so grateful to the people behind GINA and the people who are working to make sure that people with genetic variants like mine don't fear discrimination. But they still do, and

I hear from patients all the time who are really concerned about even letting their PCP know that this disease runs in their family.

[*Ms. Vallabh continued her remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Ms. Vallabh. In rare diseases, every person who comes forward to participate is like a quantum leap in the amount of data we have. So I hope that we keep working on the sort of legal framework behind celebrating patients who come forward, and I think we're headed in the right direction.

[*Mr. Look made brief remarks, followed by Dr. Linehan, who concluded as follows.*]

Dr. Linehan. And over the years, our approach has always been the same: that you shouldn't be surprised, the progress people can make working together if you're not quite so concerned about who gets credit for the work. And I think that—[*applause*]. And that's always—you get so tied up, and then—but we all think, those of us in science or those clinicians all think, why did we go in this field in the first place? It was to help patients. And then, you got involved in all these things about promotions and who knows what—publications or something. But the leadership comes from the top. The good news is, we have great leadership. The leadership comes from the top. And I think we can change the culture. It's going to take a little bit of that, but we can do it.

The President. And just—[*applause*]—one of the charges I've given all the Federal agencies working together on this is looking at the regulatory framework we have that was designed for another era of medicine and making sure we update it. And that's where I think the work that we do with Congress can be very important here. And there's good bipartisan support for how we think about this.

So, for example, we've got a new FDA Commissioner, Robert Cardiff [Califf].* Congratulations, Doctor. But the FDA traditionally has thought about protecting the public health in terms of, these are medical devices, and these are drugs, and there are certain categories, and here's certain protocols that we go through. And when it comes to gathering data, disseminating data, making sure it's accurate and valid, figuring out how it's communicated to the patient or the individual who's interested in it, sometimes, we're fitting square pegs into round holes, and we may have to reconceptualize how we think about this to open up this space.

When—I mentioned researchers earlier. Well, part of the reason that people are worried about getting credit is because research dollars and grants flow in the direction of who gets credit. And so rethinking how we design—the NIH and other agencies redesign their grant-making to encourage collaboration rather than siloing, that's going to be important. Right?

So there's going to be a whole range of areas where we may need new safeguards, there—for example, in terms of privacy and security of the data that's being disseminated. There may be other areas where we need to break down regulations that might have applied and made sense in another era of medicine, but aren't going to apply now. And that's the kind of evaluation that we're doing.

Because ultimately, this is going to be successful because everybody in this process starts rolling in the same direction. This won't work unless we have the private sector coming up with innovation. And that includes the drug companies, and that includes manufacturers of—ultimately, something that's just tracking your heart rate may be able to track a whole bunch of other stuff that is giving you a constant flow of information on a daily basis to keep you healthier.

We want to encourage that kind of innovation, and we don't want to have bureaucracy stand in the way of that. On the other hand, we also know that there's going to be possibilities for abuse, and really making sure that we have private sector providers, researchers, doctors,

* White House correction.

academics, Government officials, agencies all figuring out what's the basic architecture and having an open mind about continually updating it, modifying it, it—if we get this right now—and this includes, by the way, the Cancer Moonshot that Vice President Biden is initiating, because a lot of the progress is going to be in this same space, making sure that we're all working in the same direction. If we do that, I'm confident that, at least for Malia and Sasha's generation, they're going to be able to make progress in ways—and live healthier lives in ways that we could not imagine.

Dr. Hamblin. That's all our time, can we get a round of applause for the panelists?

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:25 a.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. Ms. Vallabh referred to her husband Eric Minikel; Stuart L. Schreiber, director, Broad Institute Center for the Science of Therapeutics; and Eric S. Lander, Cochair, President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology. She also referred to the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA). Mr. Look referred to his daughter Katie.

Remarks on United States Efforts To Combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization at the Department of State
February 25, 2016

Good evening, everybody. I just met with my National Security Council as part of our regular effort to review and intensify our campaign to destroy ISIL. And I want to thank Secretary Kerry for hosting us and for his leadership of American diplomacy, not only in the Middle East, but around the world. Secretary Carter and Chairman Dunford updated us on our military campaign, and Brett McGurk, my Special Envoy to our coalition, helped lead a review of our overall strategy.

At the outset, I want to say again that this remains a difficult fight. The situation in Syria and Iraq is one of the most complex the world has seen in recent times. ISIL is entrenched, including in urban areas, using innocent civilians as human shields. Even in places where ISIL has been driven out, it leaves behind utter devastation: communities in ruin that need to be stabilized and rebuilt, which will take years and tremendous international resources. Because, certainly in Iraq, they're hard pressed to come up with everything that they need to rebuild, and in Syria, the regime there still is not constituted in such a way that it is investing in civilian populations.

Countries, communities, and groups that agree on fighting ISIL in the short term often don't agree on broader, long-term goals. Indeed, the fight in Syria is not only a civil war, but it's also a proxy war between regional powers, reflecting deep sectarian and political rivalries. Russia's intervention and airstrikes have reinforced the Asad regime and made a humanitarian catastrophe even worse. And the entire world has been horrified by images of starving Syrians, including children, reduced to near skeletons.

So this is a tough situation with a lot of moving parts. And as a consequence, I want to thank John for his tireless efforts, along with his team, to reach a cessation of hostilities in the civil war. None of us are under any illusions. We're all aware of the many potential pitfalls, and there are plenty of reasons for skepticism. But history would judge us harshly if we did not do our part in at least trying to end this terrible conflict with diplomacy.

If implemented—and that's a significant "if"—this cessation could reduce the violence and get more food and aid to Syrians who are suffering and desperately need it. It could save lives. Potentially, it could also lead to negotiations on a political settlement to end the civil war so that everybody can focus their attention on destroying ISIL. And that's why the United States will do everything we can to maximize the chances of success in this cessation of hostilities. At the same time, I want to make totally clear that there will be absolutely no cease-fire

with respect to ISIL. We remain relentless in going after them.

About 2 months ago, at the Pentagon, I said that we had to squeeze ISIL's core in Syria and Iraq—its heart—to make it harder for these killers to pump their terror and their propaganda to the rest of the world. And over the last 2 months, the good news is, we've done exactly that. We've continued to intensify our efforts, and we're seeing results.

Today I directed my team to continue accelerating this campaign on all fronts. Our 66-member coalition, including Arab partners, continues to grow stronger. Over the past 2 months, thanks to Secretary Carter's good work, just about all of our military partners have agreed to increase their contributions, buying into our conception of how we ramp up the pressure on ISIL. Dutch aircraft are now striking ISIL targets in Syria. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are expanding their role in the air campaign. Canada is tripling its personnel to help train and advise forces in Iraq.

Every day, our air campaign—more than 10,000 strikes so far—continues to destroy ISIL forces, infrastructure, and heavy weapons. ISIL fighters are learning that they've got no safe haven. We can hit them anywhere, anytime, and we do. In fact, ISIL still has not had a single successful major offensive operation in Syria or Iraq since last summer. And we continue to go after ISIL leaders and commanders, taking them out, day in, day out, one after another after another.

With coalition training, equipment and support—including our special forces—local forces continue to push ISIL back out of territory that they had previously held. After intense block-by-block fighting, Iraqi forces recently succeeded in pushing ISIL out of Ramadi. ISIL has now lost a series of key Iraqi towns and cities, more than 40 percent of the areas it once controlled in Iraq. And today we discussed the next phases of this fight, including moving against ISIL in the city of Hit, and the resources needed to retake Anbar Province and Mosul. And as we approach the G–7 this spring, I'll continue to work with the international community so Iraq gets the financial support it needs to sustain this campaign, rebuild communities that have been devastated by ISIL presence, and pursue critical economic reforms.

Meanwhile, in Syria, a coalition of local forces continues to push ISIL back, including out of the strategic Tishrin Dam area. Now they're battling ISIL at al-Shaddadi. And they're continuing to squeeze ISIL's stronghold of Raqqa, cutting off highways and supply lines. So Raqqa is not the capital of a growing caliphate; it's increasingly under stress as ISIL territory shrinks.

Thanks to our wave of strikes against its oil infrastructure, tanker trucks, wells, and refineries, ISIL's oil production and revenues are significantly reduced. We're destroying the storage sites where ISIL holds its cash. Its money is literally going up in smoke. As a result, ISIL has been forced to slash the salaries of its fighters, which, increasingly, diminishes their morale. We continue to hear reports of defections and executions of those who try to defect.

At the same time, thanks to the coordination of many nations, including Turkey's continuing work to tighten its border, the flow of foreign terrorist fighters into Syria finally appears to be slowing. The bottom line is, there are few—there are fewer ISIL fighters on the battlefield in Syria and Iraq, and for those who are there, it's harder for them to recruit and replenish their ranks.

As its finances shrink, ISIL is also imposing more taxes and fines on those under its brutal rule. That, in turn, stokes even more resentment among local populations. More people are realizing that ISIL is not a caliphate, it's a crime ring. "It's a criminal gang pretending to be a state," said one Syrian refugee. "They turned out to be thieves," said another. ISIL, said one Syrian, "has made an enemy of almost everyone."

So they're not winning over hearts and minds, and they're under severe pressure. But as we've said all along, the only way to deal with ISIL in a way that defeats them in a lasting way is to end the chaos and the civil war

that has engulfed Syria. That's how ISIL was able to thrive in the first place. The cessation of hostilities that's scheduled to take effect at midnight tomorrow is a potential step in bringing about an end to the chaos.

Now, even under the best of circumstances, we don't expect the violence to end immediately. In fact, I think we are certain that there will continue to be fighting, in part because not only ISIL, but an organization like al-Nusra, that is not part of any negotiations and is hostile to the United States, is going to continue to fight.

But everybody knows what needs to happen, and that is, all parties that are part of the cessation of activities need to end attacks, including aerial bombardment. Humanitarian aid must be allowed to reach areas under siege. And a lot of that is going to depend on whether the Syrian regime, Russia, and their allies live up to their commitments. The coming days will be critical, and the world will be watching.

More broadly, this is going to be a test of whether the parties are truly committed to negotiations. The process agreed to in Vienna is clear: a transition toward a more inclusive representative Government, a new constitution, followed by free elections.

I will say it again: Such a future, I am convinced, cannot include Bashar al-Asad. It's clear that after years of his barbaric war against his own people—including torture and barrel bombs and sieges and starvation—many Syrians will never stop fighting until Asad is out of power. There's no alternative to a managed transition away from Asad. It's the only way to end the civil war and unite the Syrian people against terrorists.

Now, this is an area where there's still significant dispute between us and the Russians, between us and the Iranians, between us and some of the other players on the ground. And the question is going to be whether the cessation of hostilities gives all the parties concerned an opportunity to reflect and assess what, in fact, will be required in order for us to see an end to the fighting in Syria.

Beyond Syria and Iraq, I want to point out that we continue to go after ISIL wherever it tries to take root, working with partners from Nigeria to Afghanistan. As we showed last week with our strike on an ISIL training camp in Libya, which targeted a senior ISIL operative, we will continue to use the full range of tools to eliminate ISIL threats wherever they are. Meanwhile, the United States will continue to support the Libyan people as they work to form a new Government and regain control of their country, as we've seen in recent days with Libyans celebrating in the streets as ISIL was driven from parts of Benghazi.

Even as we continue our military and counterterrorism efforts, we also recognize that it's not enough to defeat ISIL on the battlefield. We're going to have to defeat its ideology, which radicalizes, recruits, and inspires people to violence. The United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia are stepping up their efforts to discredit ISIL propaganda.

Here at the State Department, our new Global Engagement Center will do more to lift up voices that expose ISIL as the murderers that they are: killers of innocent Muslim men, women and children. And my administration is working with high-tech leaders in Silicon Valley—including Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter—to help counter ISIL online and to empower more people, especially young people, to use their talents and technology to push back on ISIL's propaganda.

Finally, we had an opportunity to discuss the importance of us staying vigilant here at home. Lone actors or small groups of terrorists like those in San Bernardino are very hard to detect. And they continue to pose a serious threat. So at every level—Federal, State, and local—law enforcement needs to be working together, 24/7, sharing information and connecting the dots to prevent attacks.

As we do, we'll continue to partner with communities to help them stay strong and resilient. That includes upholding our values, including freedom of religion, so that we stay united as one American family.

So, to summarize, the fight against ISIL will remain difficult, but we will continue to draw on all elements of our national power: military, intelligence, diplomacy, homeland security,

law enforcement, and the strength of our communities. And I am confident that we will prevail. We are in a better position now than we were last month and a better position last month than we were 3 months ago.

In the end, brutality of ISIL is no match for the yearning of millions who want to live in security and dignity. I think of the Syrian who returned to his home in Kobani, a city that was in ruins but liberated from ISIL. "Despite knowing life would be tougher here," he said, "I chose to come back." And I think of the tens of thousands of people of Tikrit in Iraq, who have returned home, including students back at their university, focusing on a better future.

So the road ahead will not be easy, but our coalition continues to grow stronger. The ISIL core in Syria and Iraq continues to shrink. With allies and partners and the service of our dedicated personnel, our diplomats, our civilians, and our military, we will destroy this barbaric terrorist organization and continue to stand with people across the region who seek a better and a safer future.

Thanks very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:58 p.m. in the Treaty Room. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., USMC; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; Mohammed Saad and Abu Salem, Syrian activists living in Turkey; and Noureddine Chouchane, a senior ISIL operative who was killed in a U.S. airstrike targeting ISIL training facilities in Sabratha, Libya, on February 19.

Remarks on the Seventh Anniversary of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 in Jacksonville, Florida
February 26, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody!

Audience members. Hello!

The President. Well, please, everybody, please have a seat. Well, it is great to be back in Jacksonville. As President, I've been to all 50 States. I have seen some pretty incredible things, but I've also got a bucket list of things I still need to get done. Apparently, I have not yet made it to the world's largest outdoor cocktail party. [*Laughter*] So there's some local things I've got to check out at some point. That's the kind of thing you do once you are not President anymore. [*Laughter*] So, hopefully, I'll see you back, but it is great to be in Florida on a Friday afternoon.

I want to thank Jaime not only for the introduction, but more importantly, for your service to our Nation. Thank you so much. [*Applause*] Thank you.

I also want to recognize two outstanding Members of Congress who are here. Representative Corrine Brown. Where is Corrine? [*Applause*] Yay, Corrine! And Representative Patrick Murphy. And I also want to thank everybody at Saft America for hosting us today, especially Tom—where—Tom Alcide and Chris Kaniut. You can't miss him. [*Laughter*]

Shootings in Newton and Hesston, Kansas

We're here to talk about the great things you guys are doing at this facility. But before I begin, I do want to say a few words about yet another mass shooting that we've had to endure. Some of you may have heard, yesterday a gunman murdered three people and injured 14 others in Hesston, Kansas. And this morning I spoke with Mayor Kauffman and expressed our deepest condolences for the victims, their families, and to the community as a whole.

This comes after last weekend's rampage in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where six more innocent Americans were gunned down. And these acts may not dominate the news today, but these are two more communities in America that are torn apart by grief. And I felt it was important for me to say something today because somehow, as I've said before, this becomes routine, these sort of mass shootings that are taking place.

We cannot become numb to this. Anybody who says they want to keep the American people safe has to care about this, because it's happening in far too many towns and affecting far too many innocent Americans. And there are some things we can do about it. And right now this Congress may not have any appetite to do something about it, but we need one that does. As long as I hold this office, I'm going to keep on bringing this up, even if it's not getting the same attention that it should. And I wish I didn't have to keep on talking about it. Lord knows I wish I don't have to—I wish I didn't have to make these phone calls and comfort families. The real tragedy is the degree to which this has become routine.

So I hope all of you pay attention to this. I hope the media pays attention to this. Once a week, we have these shootings. And it doesn't dominate the news, and that's got to change.

National Economy

So thank you for allowing me to talk about that for a moment.

The truth is, though, that even when we've got some real challenges out there, the reason I'm here today is because Saft is telling a story about the amazing work that people all across this country have done to bring America back from one of the worst financial crises in our history.

So think about it. I—sometimes, people also forget where we've been, and if you forget where you've been, sometimes, you don't know where you need to go. Seven years ago, the ground we were standing on was an empty plot of swampland. I don't know if gators make it up this far, but—[*laughter*]—it was not some place you'd want to be wondering around. It had been ignored for more than a decade since the Navy base here closed.

Back then, all around us, the economy was in a free fall; 800,000 Americans were losing their jobs every single month. That's almost the entire population of Jacksonville joining the unemployment line every few weeks. Families lost their homes, families lost their savings. And people here in Florida were especially hard hit; the unemployment rate here in Florida hit 11.2 percent, which was even higher than the national average.

Fast-forward today. Businesses like yours have created jobs for 71 straight months, 14 million new jobs overall. We've cut the unemployment rate by more than half. Nationally, the high was 10 percent. It's now down to 4.9 percent. And here in Jacksonville, it is even lower. Our auto industry just had its best year ever. We've created more than 900,000 new manufacturing jobs in the past 6 years.

Meanwhile, our high school graduation rate is at an alltime high. Nearly 18 million Americans have gained health care coverage, although here in Florida, there are a whole bunch of folks who haven't because the State hasn't expanded Medicaid; that's another topic. Businesses like Saft are leading a clean energy revolution that's creating jobs and making our planet safer and more secure at the same time.

Now, you don't hear a lot about this from the folks who are on the campaign trail. They're spending all their time talking down America. I don't know when it became fashionable to do that. But I sure am proud of what I've seen Americans do over the course of these last 7 years since the crisis hit. And anybody who says we are not absolutely better off today than we were just 7 years ago, they're not leveling with you. They're not telling the truth. By almost every economic measure, we are significantly better off, and Florida is significantly better off. Jacksonville is a whole lot better off.

And the reason I make this point is, none of this was an accident. It happened because of your hard work. It happened because of your resilience. It happened because Americans looked out for one another and families scrimped and saved and workers retrained and businesses hired and expanded and students hit the books. And it happened because, early on, my administration put in place some pretty smart policies to rebuild our economy on a new foundation for growth and prosperity.

And thanks to America's steady, persistent work, those policies are paying off in big, tangible ways, and we're not talking about it enough. And if we don't talk about why it is

that things got better, then we may end up pursuing policies that will make things worse. It's not to argue that everything is perfect. There are still folks who are looking for work. There are still problems in terms of people getting higher wages, being able to save for college, being able to save—being able to retire. But if we don't recognize the progress we've made and how that came about, then we may chase some snake oil and end up having policies that get us back in the swamp.

So part of what made us able to recover was something called the Recovery Act, which I fought for from my first days in office. We just marked the seventh anniversary. And that recovery plan was a success. At the time, there were a bunch of folks who said, "What, it's not working, it's not happening," because it didn't happen overnight. But you ask any credible economist, and they will tell you that if we had not acted, if we had not passed the Recovery Act, if we hadn't saved the auto industry, if we hadn't taken the steps we did, we could have fallen into another Great Depression.

And if you doubt that, you look around the world. Because in places like Europe, where they took a path of cutting and cutting and not investing in clean energy and not investing in transportation and not investing in working retraining—some of the same strategies that some politicians were arguing for right here in the United States and are still arguing for—those countries still have double-digit unemployment today. Some of these countries still face double-digit unemployment. We're doing better than them on almost every measure.

Here's what the Recovery Act did. It cut taxes for businesses investing in the future. It cut taxes for 95 percent of working families, more than 100 million families in all. The extensions of some of these measures are still in effect, and they're helping more than a million families here in Florida making ends meet.

We extended aid to help working people put food on the table, kept millions of people from falling into poverty. And that, in turn, meant that they could be customers at local businesses, and that helped support local businesses in the area.

We helped States and communities keep hundreds of thousands of teachers and first responders on the job, which meant they could afford to pay their mortgage and they could afford to go to a restaurant once in a while and they could afford to buy the computer that their child needed for school, all of which kept the economy going.

We put people back to work repairing our roads and our bridges and our ports, even sprucing up the National Mall and Ellis Island and the Grand Canyon. And we did this all while making this one of the most transparent, above-board pieces of legislation in our history; almost zero waste or fraud. I put Joe Biden in charge, and we call him the sheriff. He wasn't putting up with any nonsense.

We also aimed higher than just preventing another Great Depression. We wanted to build a new foundation for a stronger, smarter economy. We wanted to build a future where prosperity wasn't fueled by reckless speculation on Wall Street and excessive consumer debt, pursuing paper profits. We wanted a future that was solid, where prosperity is built and shared by a skilled, productive workforce. A prosperity that rests on sound investments that spread opportunity at home and help America lead the world in technology and innovation and the discoveries that will help shape the 21st century.

And so I came here to Saft to show what it means to invest in the future. The future is built by the workers here at Saft and in companies like it all across the country. Because there are few areas where our efforts to build a new economy have paid off in a bigger way than in how we manage energy, make it cleaner, make it more efficient, help consumers, help businesses, and create jobs.

When I took office, we were hopelessly addicted to foreign oil. The future of our renewable energy industry was pretty cloudy; it looked like it might start collapsing. But we knew that there were technologies out there that existed. The problem was, they were too expensive. And because credit had frozen during the recession, it meant that a lot of entrepreneurs, a lot of businesses, they couldn't

scale up to start taking advantage of these new technologies.

Meanwhile, countries like Germany and China were racing ahead towards clean energy, creating the jobs that come with it, and we were falling behind. And I knew that the nation that won the race to drive the global economy and new energy, that was going to be the nation that won the 21st century, and I wanted America to win that race.

So here's what we did. As part of the Recovery Act, we made the largest single investment in clean energy in our history. We invested in solar power. We invested in wind power. We invested in geothermal power. We gave seed money to entrepreneurs and businesses to get them to work with these promising new technologies and get them out of the door faster. Almost 98 percent of those investments that we made under one of our loan programs are paying off. Taxpayers are getting their money back and some, and these businesses are thriving.

And overall, the clean energy investments we made in the Recovery Act have combined to support hundreds of thousands of jobs, including nearly 300 right here at Saft. This was an example of the fruits of those investments that we made: jobs that America needs done getting done right here in Florida.

Just look around. You see what a difference hard-working Americans, with some smart help from the Government, have been able to accomplish. Seven years ago, electricity from solar was just getting off the ground; today, we've multiplied the amount of solar power America produces 30 times over. Seven years ago, there were just a handful of large-scale utility solar plants in America; today, there are more than 30. Solar jobs are growing 12 times faster than other jobs; they're paying better than average. Meanwhile, we've tripled the power we harness from the wind. We've cut our next—our net imports of foreign oil by nearly 60 percent.

And all of you have helped us do this. Thanks to the investments we made in the Recovery Act, we've seen huge gains in our advanced battery industry. Because solar and wind don't work unless we've got good ways to store power when the sun is out or the wind is blowing so that it can be used in a regular, reliable way.

And the good news is, America now has more than two dozen factories manufacturing batteries and components for electric cars. And these batteries are nearly 70-percent cheaper and 60-percent more powerful than just 5 years ago. That's how fast we've been making progress in this area. And we're not just making advanced batteries for cars, we're putting them together so they're making batteries the size of cars. We just saw some, looked like trailer parks. And these batteries help stabilize our energy grid, which are—is allowing us to transition faster to renewable energy.

That's what you're doing here at Saft. On my tour, I stepped inside—I took a look at a shipping container filled with cutting-edge lithium-ion batteries. It stores energy for times when the wind's not blowing, the Sun's not shining. These batteries are the kinds of things folks don't always think about when it comes to renewable energy, but it couldn't be more important. So the good news is that over the final 3 months of last year, we deployed more advanced energy storage capacity than over the previous 2 years combined.

And that's what we should be investing in. Clean energy is about owning the kind of innovation where America has always been the leader. Clean energy is about unleashing the potential of all these new technologies, because we can figure some stuff out just about better than anybody else. And just think about what we can do with something like solar in a place like the Sunshine State.

Clean energy is about cutting carbon emissions and fighting climate change so that we can help our kids breathe cleaner and protect the planet for future generations and make sure that Florida doesn't get flooded. Clean energy is about making our economy less dependent on foreign oil from some of the most unstable parts of the world. And clean energy is about a steady stream of good jobs that give families a chance to reach for something

higher and leave something better behind for their kids.

And here's one other great fact about clean energy. It's providing thousands of jobs for veterans, including vets that we brought home from Iraq and Afghanistan. I've often said to CEOs across the country, if you want a job done right, hire a vet. And that's why, working with them, we've been able to see the solar industry commit to hiring 50,000 more vets in the coming years. This has been part of Michelle's and Jill Biden's Joining Forces program. So here at Saft, more than one-third of your employees are veterans. In fact, if you're a veteran, please stand up so we can thank you for your service.

So companies like this are powered by veterans like Jaime. Jaime's got five kids, grew up in Puerto Rico, lived in Atlantic City, served in the military for 26 years. For the last 4 years, he's been a team leader at the company that's building our energy future. And he's seen a lot, but the one thing he's learned is that—and I'm quoting him now—"there's always so much that changes very fast, but so much possibility."

And that's what Saft is about; that's what this recovery has been about. Things are changing fast, and that's scary sometimes. It means that you've got to constantly retrain for the jobs of the future. It means that the economy is interconnected and what happens on the other side of the world will affect us, because you may be selling some batteries over there.

Sometimes, it's disorienting. But there's so much possibility. And that's the story of these last 7 years. So much has changed fast, but there's one country on Earth that sees possibility where others see peril. There's on country on Earth that has the power to make change for—work for us and not against us, and that's the United States of America, as long we're not scared of it. We always adapt to change. We always figure it out. Because we're a nation of innovators and risk takers, we make change work for us.

So we turned recession into recovery faster than almost any other country. We took an empty swamp, turned it into an engine of innovation. And we knew that it was going to take more than 1 year or even one President to get to where we need to go, but we can see real, tangible evidence of what a new economy looks like. It looks like this facility right here.

It's an economy that's brimming with new industry and commerce and new energy and new technologies and highly skilled, higher wage workers. It's an economy that is producing for the United States and U.S. markets, but is also selling stuff overseas, because we make it better than anybody else because we've got the best workers and the best innovators and the best scientists than anybody else.

The future is ours. But to finish the job requires steady, persistent effort. We can't grow complacent. We can't chase false promises. We've got to be smart. We've got to work together. But I've never been more optimistic than I am now that we will get to where we need to go, because I've seen what you can do. And if we keep working together, everything is possible and our best days are just ahead.

So thank you, Jacksonville. Thank you, Saft. Thank you, veterans. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. at Saft America, Inc.'s advanced batteries plant. In his remarks, he referred to Jaime Vazquez, production team technician team leader, Thomas J. Alcide, president, and Christopher Kaniut, general manager, Saft America, Inc.; Cedric Larry Ford, suspected gunman in the shootings in Newton, KS, and at Excel Industries in Hesston, KS, on February 25; Renee Benjamin, Joshua Higbee, and Brian Sadowsky, who were killed in the shootings; Mayor David K. Kauffman of Hesston, KS; and Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden.

The President's Weekly Address
February 27, 2016

Hi, everybody. This week, we continued our mission to destroy ISIL. This remains a difficult fight, and the situation in Syria and Iraq is incredibly complex. ISIL is entrenched, including in urban areas. It uses innocent civilians as human shields. Despite these challenges though, I can report that we're making progress. And this week, I directed my team to continue accelerating our campaign on all fronts.

Our 66-member coalition, including Arab partners, continues to grow stronger. More nations are making more contributions. Every day, our air campaign—more than 10,000 strikes so far—continues to destroy ISIL forces. And we continue to go after ISIL leaders and commanders, taking them out, day in, day out, one after another after another.

In Iraq, ISIL has now lost more than 40 percent of the areas it once controlled. In Syria, a coalition of local forces is tightening the squeeze on ISIL's stronghold of Raqqa. As we bomb its oil infrastructure, ISIL's been forced to slash salaries of its fighters. Thanks to the work of many nations, the flow of foreign terrorist fighters into Syria finally appears to be slowing. In short, in Syria and Iraq, ISIL's territory is shrinking, there are fewer ISIL fighters on the battlefield, and it's harder for them to recruit and replenish their ranks.

Still, the only way to deal ISIL a lasting defeat is to end the civil war and chaos in Syria upon which ISIL thrives. A cessation of hostilities in the civil war is scheduled to take effect this weekend. Now, we're not under any illusions. There are plenty of reasons for skepticism. And even under the best of circumstances, the violence will not end right away. But everyone knows what needs to happen. All parties must end attacks, including aerial bombardment. Humanitarian aid must be allowed to reach areas under siege. And a lot of this is going to depend on whether the Syrian regime, Russia, and their allies live up to their commitments. The coming hours and days will be critical, and the world is watching.

That said, there will be absolutely no ceasefire in our fight against ISIL. We'll remain relentless. Beyond Syria and Iraq, we continue to use the full range of our tools to go after ISIL wherever it tries to take root, as we showed with our recent strike on an ISIL training camp in Libya. With partners around the world, we'll continue discrediting the ideology that ISIL uses to radicalize and recruit and inspire people to violence, especially online.

Finally, we'll continue to stay vigilant here at home, including trying to identify lone actors or small groups of terrorists like those in San Bernardino, which are harder to detect. Our homeland security and law enforcement professionals are hard at work, 24/7. At the same time, we'll keep working to build partnerships of trust and respect with communities to help them stay strong and resilient. And all of this includes upholding our values—including freedom of religion—so that we stay united as one American family.

This fight against ISIL will remain difficult. But we will continue to draw on all elements of our national power, including the strength of our communities and our values as Americans. And I am absolutely confident that we will prevail. We will destroy this barbaric terrorist organization and continue to stand with those around the world who seek a better, safer future.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:30 p.m. on February 26 in the Container Storage Area at the Saft America, Inc., advanced batteries plant in Jacksonville, FL, for broadcast on February 27. In the address, the President referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 26, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 27. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Presenting the Medal of Honor to Senior Chief Petty Officer Edward C. Byers, Jr.

February 29, 2016

Please be seated. Well, good morning, everyone, and welcome to the White House. The ethos—the creed—that guides every Navy SEAL says this: "I do not advertise the nature of my work, nor seek recognition for my actions." Which is another way of saying that standing here today, in front of the entire Nation, is not Senior Chief Ed Byers's idea of a good time. [*Laughter*] Like so many of our special operators, Ed is defined by a deep sense of humility. He doesn't seek the spotlight. In fact, he shuns it. He's the consummate quiet professional. I imagine there are a lot of other places he'd rather be than in front of all these cameras. Back in Coronado for another hell week—[*laughter*]—holding his breath under dark, frigid water, Spending months being cold, wet and sandy, I'm sure there are other things he'd rather be doing.

But the Medal of Honor is our Nation's highest military decoration. And today's ceremony is truly unique: a rare opportunity for the American people to get a glimpse of a special breed of warrior that so often serves in the shadows. We're a nation of more than 300 million Americans. Of these, less than 1 percent wear the uniform of our Armed Forces. Of these, just a small fraction serve in our special operations forces. Among those who train to become a SEAL, only a select few emerge and earn the right to wear that golden trident.

And consider this: In the entire history of the Navy SEALs, just five have been awarded the Medal of Honor. Their names have become legend: Norris, Kerrey, Thornton, Murphy, Monsoor, and now, a sixth, Byers. Among the members of the Medal of Honor Society who are with us, we are especially honored by the presence of Tommy Norris and Mike Thornton.

Now, given the nature of Ed's service, there is a lot that we cannot say today. Many of the operational details of his mission remain classified. Many of his teammates cannot be mentioned. And this is as it should be. Their success demands secrecy, and that secrecy saves lives.

There are, however, many distinguished guests that we can acknowledge, including Members of Congress, leaders from across our military, including the Navy. In fact, this may be the largest gathering of special ops in the history of the White House. [*Laughter*] Among them, we have, from Special Operations Command, General Joe Votel and Vice Admiral Sean Pybus; from Joint Special Operations Command, Rear Admiral Tim Szymanski; and from Naval Special Warfare Command, Rear Admiral Brian Losey and Force Master Chief Derrick Walters. For America's special operators, this is a little bit of a family reunion, and it's wonderful to have them all here.

Most of all, we welcome Ed's wonderful family: his wife Madison, who like so many military spouses has kept their family strong back home while Ed has been deployed; their spectacular daughter Hannah, who is a competitive figure skater and looks the part. [*Laughter*] Ed likes to jump out of planes with a parachute, and when he's not skydiving, he's driving his 1976 Shovelhead Harley. [*Laughter*] When he's not out riding, he's staying in shape with Hannah, who is apparently his workout partner. [*Laughter*] It's good when your trainer is a Navy SEAL. [*Laughter*]

We also welcome mom's—Ed's mom Peggy, who I understand had one question when Ed told her about this ceremony: "Do you think I can come?" [*Laughter*] That's so sweet. Yes, Mom, you're allowed to come when your son gets the Medal of Honor. [*Laughter*] Ed's brothers and sisters are here, as are about 50 cousins from all across the country. And dozens of friends, many who served alongside Ed, some who have traveled from around the world to be here today. That's the brotherhood—the depth of loyalty to service and to mission—that binds these teams.

Now, looking back, it seems Ed Byers was destined to serve. His father served in the Na-

vy during World War II and now rests in Arlington. As a boy growing up in Grand Rapids, Ohio, Ed would be in the woods, in camouflage, in his words, "playing military," and I suspect the other kids did not stand a chance. [*Laughter*] A Boy Scout who loved adventure, Ed saw a movie about the Navy SEALs and fell in love with the idea of deploying by sea, air, and land.

"I believe that man will not merely endure. He will prevail," William Faulkner once said, "because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance." Even if he had never performed the actions for which he is being recognized here today, Ed Byers would be long remembered for his compassion, his sacrifice, and his endurance: 11 overseas deployments; 9 combat tours; recipient of the Purple Heart twice, the Bronze Star with valor five times.

About 3 years ago, our Nation called on that spirit once again. In Afghanistan, an American doctor—a husband and father of four children who was working to bring health care to the Afghan people—was driving down a rural road. Gunmen surrounded his car and took him hostage. They tied his hands and marched him into the mountains. The days went by. In a remote valley, in a small single-room building, surrounded by Taliban, he lost all hope. "I was certain," he thought, "I was about to die." His captors told him, the Americans are not coming for you. Well, they were wrong. Whenever Americans are taken hostage in the world, we move heaven and earth to bring them home safe. We send some thunder and some lightning—our special operator forces, folks like Ed Byers. They're carefully selected for their character, their integrity, and their judgment. They are highly trained, with skills honed by years of experience. And they willingly volunteer for missions of extraordinary risk like this one.

In this case, there was reason to believe that a Taliban commander was on his way to take custody of the American hostage and move him into Pakistan. So time was of the essence. From a remote forward operating base, Ed and his joint team geared up, boarded their helos, and launched. Once on the ground, they moved—under the cover of darkness, on that cold December night—through the mountains, down rocky trails, for hours. They found their target and moved in quickly and quietly. Then, when they were less than 100 feet from the building, a guard came out, and the bullets started flying.

Our SEALs rushed to the doorway, which was covered by a layer of blankets. Ed started ripping them down, exposing himself to enemy fire. A teammate, the lead assaulter, pushed in and was hit. Fully aware of the danger, Ed moved in next. An enemy guard aimed his rifle right at him. Ed fired. Someone moved across the floor, perhaps the hostage, perhaps another guard lunging for a weapon. The struggle was hand to hand. Ed straddled him, pinning him down. Ed adjusted his night vision goggles. Things came into focus, and he was on top of a guard.

The American hostage later described the scene. The dark room suddenly filled with men and the sound of exploding gunfire. Narrow beams of light shot in every direction. Voices called out his name. He answered, "I'm right here."

Hearing English, Ed leapt across the room and threw himself on the hostage, using his own body to shield him from the bullets. Another enemy fighter appeared, and with his body, Ed kept shielding the hostage. With his bare hands, Ed pinned the fighter to the wall and held him until his teammates took action. It was over almost as soon as it began. In just minutes, by going after those guards, Ed saved the lives of several teammates and that hostage. You're safe, the SEALs told the doctor, you are with American forces. And that hostage came home to be reunited with his wife and his children.

Now, success came with a price. That first SEAL through the door, Ed's friend Nic, was grievously wounded. Ed is a medic, so on the helo out, he stayed with Nic, helping to perform CPR the entire flight—40 minutes long. Today we salute Chief Petty Officer Nicolas Checque. Back in Monroeville, Pennsylvania, they remembered him as the driven kid: the football player and wrestler who always wanted

to be a SEAL. For his valor on this mission, he was awarded the Navy Cross, and he's among the 70 members of the Naval Special Warfare community—55 of them SEALs—who have made the ultimate sacrifice since 9/11. The enduring love of Nic's family and all those who admired him remind us of the immense sacrifices that our remarkable Gold Star families have made and our obligation to stand with them always.

So today we don't simply honor a single individual. We also pay tribute to a community across our entire military: special operators, aviators, engineers, technicians, analysts, countless enablers, and their devoted families. In these hard years since 9/11, our Nation has called on this community like never before. Small in number, they have borne an extraordinarily heavy load. But they continue to volunteer, mission after mission, year after year. Few Americans ever see it. I am truly privileged and humbled that, as Commander in Chief, I do get to see it.

I've given the order sending you into harm's way. I see the difference you make every day: the partners you train, the relationships you forge, the other hostages that you've brought home, the terrorists that you take out. I've waited, like many of you, in those minutes that seem like hours when the margin between success and failure is razor thin, for word that the team is out safe. I've grieved with you and I've stood with you at Dover to welcome our fallen heroes on their final journey home.

Our special operations forces are a strategic national asset. They teach us that humans are more important than hardware. Today is a reminder that our Nation has to keep investing in this irreplaceable asset, which means deploying our special operators wisely, preserving force and family, making sure these incredible Americans stay strong in body, in mind, and in spirit.

So I'll end where I started, with the SEAL ethos: "In times of war or uncertainty, there is a special breed of warrior ready to answer our Nation's call. A common man with uncommon desire to succeed. Forged by adversity, he stands alongside America's finest special operations forces to serve his country, the American people, and protect their way of life." Senior Chief Edward Byers, Jr., is such a man. Chief Petty Officer Nicolas Checque was that man. Every Navy SEAL and special operator who serves with honor in his chosen profession is that man.

The American people may not always see them. We may not always hear of their success. But they are there in the thick of the fight, in the dark of night, achieving their mission. We thank God they're there. We sleep more peacefully in our beds tonight because patriots like these stand ready to answer our Nation's call and protect our way of life, now and forever.

And as we prepare for the reading of the citation, I ask you to join me in expressing America's profound gratitude to Navy SEAL Ed Byers and all our quiet professionals.

[*At this point, Maj. Wesley N. Spurlock III, USAF, Air Force Aide to the President, read the citation, and the President presented the medal, assisted by Lt. Cmdr. Richard I. Lawlor, USN, Navy Aide to the President. Following the presentation of the medal, Capt. Michael J. Parisi, USN, Chaplain, U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps, said a prayer.*]

Well, that concludes the ceremony, but we actually throw a pretty good party here. [*Laughter*] And I've been told the hors d'oeuvres are pretty good. So we welcome all of you to join us in the reception. Ed and I are going to have to take a few more pictures before he joins you. But we are so grateful to him, we're grateful to his wonderful family. Mom, I'm glad that you could come. [*Laughter*] We are welcome—we are grateful for our other Medal of Honor recipients who are here. And to all the special forces who are here, we are extraordinarily grateful to you. This is obviously an award for individual heroism, but I'm glad we were able to make the broader point: We are so grateful for your service to our Nation.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:18 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Sen. J. Robert Kerrey, a Medal of Honor recipient; Gen. Joseph L. Votel III, USA, commander, and Vice Adm. Sean A. Pybus, USN, deputy commander, U.S. Special Operations Command; Rear Adm. Timothy Szymanski, USN, assistant commanding general, Joint Special Operations Command; Rear Adm. Brian L. Losey, USN, commander, Naval Special Warfare Command; Dilip Joseph, medical director, Morning Star Development, who was kidnapped in eastern Kabul Province, Afghanistan, on December 5, 2012, his wife Cilicia, and their children Asha, Jaron, Tobiah, and Eshaan. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the reading of the citation.

Remarks Honoring the 2015 College Football Playoff National Champion University of Alabama Crimson Tide
March 2, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody!

Audience members. Hello! Roll Tide!

The President. Welcome to the White House. Roll Tide!

Audience members. Roll Tide!

The President. I guess for a lot of folks it's, welcome back. [*Laughter*] So let's give it up for the national champs, the Alabama Crimson Tide!

Everybody, please have a seat. We're so glad to have you here today. Now, my first question is, Coach, what took you so long? [*Laughter*] I mean, it's been 3 whole years since I last saw you. [*Laughter*]

We've got some big Alabama fans in the house, starting with your Governor, Governor Bentley. It's good to see you, Doctor. We've got some outstanding Members of Congress, members of the Alabama delegation. One of my most important people, the guy who takes care of me in the White House, Quincy Jackson. Where's Quincy? I know Q got here. There you go. The—I want to welcome University President Stuart Bell for the outstanding work he's done, and Athletic Director Bill Battle. Of course, a lot of recognition goes to somebody who's in the running to be the greatest college football coach of all time, Coach Nick Saban.

This is the fourth time I've hosted Alabama here at the White House. So, clearly, I've brought you some good luck. [*Laughter*] In fact, you could call me O'Bama. [*Laughter*] You like that? You've now won four titles in 7 years, which is historic. It's like winning a best-of-seven series, except you're playing 127 teams around the country. [*Laughter*]

The last time a team went on this kind of run was in the 1940s. Back then, folks were still wearing leather helmets. I don't feel like anybody in a leather helmet would do too well trying to tackle Derrick Henry. [*Laughter*] Of course, even with modern helmets, they didn't do too well tackling Derrick Henry. [*Laughter*] Derrick racked up an SEC record of more than 22,000 [2,200]* rushing yards, which is the fifth most in major college history; 28 touchdowns—all the way to becoming the Tide's second Heisman Trophy winner. Give it up for Derrick.

Where is he? He's back there somewhere. There he is right there. I met Derrick last month at the National Prayer Breakfast, and we struck a Heisman pose together. [*Laughter*] His looked a little more intimidating than mine. [*Laughter*] But I want to point out that Derrick wasn't just there to pose for pictures with fans. He led a gathering in a powerful and humble prayer. And he prayed not just for the leaders in the room, but also for—and I'm quoting him now—"people who weren't able to eat breakfast" that day, "people who don't have clothes on their back or shoes on their feet." But you could see Derrick's character in

* White House correction.

those words. This is a kid who grew up running down dirt roads, and raised on his grandma's oxtail stew. And so he knew something about hardship and was remembering that hardship in his prayer.

And that's the kind of grit that he played every game with. And that's the kind of determination that defines this entire team. Anybody who watched them knows it was not just a one-man wrecking crew. You had three more all-Americans: center Ryan Kelly, defensive lineman A'Shawn Robinson, linebacker Reggie Ragland, who returned for his senior year to make good on the pledge he made to his mama that he'd get a degree. And just because he's big doesn't mean he's not scared of his mama. [*Laughter*]

Led by Reggie and A'Shawn, the Tide's smothering defense was the best in the country against the run, third best in scoring and total defense. Quarterback Jake Coker picked apart Michigan State in the semifinals, threw for 300 yards in the title game against top-ranked Clemson. And that come-from-behind victory was a good example of just how complete this team was.

We saw a 95-yard kick return touchdown by Kenyan Drake, more than 200 receiving yards from tight end O.J. Howard, a surprise fourth-quarter onside kick. [*Laughter*] That was one of the few times you ever saw Coach Saban smile on the sidelines. [*Laughter*] You know it—there was a good night if Coach Saban was smiling. [*Laughter*] Coach earned his fifth national title. And as a bonus, it gave him an incredible 5-to-1 record at Alabama against top-ranked teams.

Of course, Coach Saban's teams aren't just defined by what they do on the field. Alabama was number one in the SEC and third among Top 25 teams in graduation rates. That is something to be proud of. They also volunteered hundreds of hours in and around Tuscaloosa: at retirement homes and at hospitals and at schools. They spent some time with Wounded Warriors from Walter Reed and Fort Belvoir earlier today.

Coach Saban and his wife Terry have raised more than $6 million through Nick's Kids foundation for charities and not-profits. And they're making plans to build their 16th Habitat for Humanity home in the 5 years since the devastating tornado in Tuscaloosa. That's one house for each of the school's 16 national titles. So, for all the other frustrated football programs out there, there's a silver lining to all these guys getting these championships because they're doing some good with it.

So I just want to say, Coach, I couldn't be prouder of you and the work that you've done. I know that the people of Alabama are extraordinarily proud of this team. Maybe the Auburn fans don't want to admit it—[*laughter*]—but everybody recognizes excellence when they see it, and nobody has had more sustained excellence as a football program at the collegiate level than the Alabama Crimson Tide.

Congratulations. And I'd like to say I'll see you next year, but we've got this thing called term limits. [*Laughter*] You can keep on going. All right?

With that, let me bring up Coach Saban to the podium.

Head Coach Nicholas L. Saban. Well, certainly, I'd like to thank Mr. President here and the White House staff for the great hospitality that—this is really special for our team and all the people who made our team special. We'd also like to thank you for your service. I think everybody here appreciates anybody who gives their lives to the service of others and the quality of our life and our great country, so we certainly appreciate that.

The President. Thanks.

Coach Saban. I'd also like to say—[*applause*]—I'd also like to congratulate our team and thank our team for a wonderful job this year. They did some things that were special in their own way. And I think the thing that was greatest about this team was they won as one. There was tremendous togetherness, respect, trust for each other. The principles and values of the organization, they all bought in. Tremendous adversity in losing early on and having 12 straight elimination games to win the championship.

So this is a really special group. This is one of the last times that we'll together. But it's certainly one of the most special times that we've

had, to come here and share this with you. And it's something that we certainly thank you for.

And our captains would like to present you again—I don't know what you——

The President. Again. [*Laughter*] I've got a lot of these jerseys.

[*At this point, the President was presented with a team jersey, helmet, and football.*]

The President. All right. Let's take a picture. You guys help me out.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:24 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Robert J. Bentley of Alabama; former University of Alabama and XFL professional football player Quincy Jackson; Gladys Henry, grandmother of University of Alabama running back Derrick Henry; Anne White, mother of University of Alabama linebacker Reggie Ragland; and Kenyan Drake, running back, University of Alabama football team.

Statement on United Nations Security Council Sanctions Against North Korea
March 2, 2016

Today the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted UNSCR 2270, which imposes significant costs on the D.P.R.K. in response to its January 6 nuclear test and February 7 missile launch. This resolution levies strong new sanctions aimed at halting Pyongyang's efforts to advance its weapons of mass destruction programs. I have consistently said that the D.P.R.K. would face consequences for its actions, and I welcome this resolution as a firm, united, and appropriate response by the international community to the D.P.R.K.'s recent provocations that flagrantly violated multiple Security Council resolutions. Today the international community, speaking with one voice, has sent Pyongyang a simple message: North Korea must abandon these dangerous programs and choose a better path for its people.

Statement on the Oregon Legislature's Passage of Legislation To Raise the Minimum Wage
March 2, 2016

I commend the Oregon Legislature and Governor Kate Brown for taking action to raise their State's minimum wage. Since I first called on Congress to increase the Federal minimum wage in 2013, 18 States and the District of Columbia have acted on their own. These efforts will boost the paychecks of hard-working Americans and help support millions of workers trying to make ends meet. Today, more than half of our States guarantee their workers a wage higher than the Federal minimum. That's progress. But Congress needs to keep up with the rest of the country. They need to act and finally give America a raise. And until they do, I'll continue to encourage States, cities, counties, and companies to act on their own to support hard-working families.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Ukraine
March 2, 2016

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary

date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13660 of March 6, 2014, is to continue in effect beyond March 6, 2016.

The actions and policies of persons that undermine democratic processes and institutions in Ukraine; threaten its peace, security, stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity; and contribute to the misappropriation of its assets, as well as the actions and policies of the Government of the Russian Federation, including its purported annexation of Crimea and its use of force in Ukraine, continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13660 with respect to Ukraine.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 2, 2016.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Zimbabwe
March 2, 2016

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency originally declared in Executive Order 13288 of March 6, 2003, and renewed every year since then, is to continue in effect beyond March 6, 2016.

The threat constituted by the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions, contributing to the deliberate breakdown in the rule of law, to politically motivated violence and intimidation, and to political and economic instability in the southern African region, has not been resolved. These actions and policies continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue this national emergency and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 2, 2016.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in Milwaukee, Wisconsin
March 3, 2016

The President. Hello, Milwaukee! Oh, it's good to be back in the Midwest! How is everybody doing today? You look great. And it's a balmy 25 degrees. [*Laughter*] The last time I was here was——

Audience member. Obama!

The President. I'm sorry—what? Oh, you were just saying my name. Okay, I thought somebody got sick or something. [*Laughter*] And if you have a seat, go ahead and sit down. I'm going to be here for a while.

The last time I was here was for Laborfest a couple years back. Next time, I think I should come for Summerfest. I hear it's pretty fun.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. It's okay? [*Laughter*]

There are some people I want to acknowledge who are here today. First of all, your outstanding mayor, Tom Barrett, is here. County Executive Chris Abele is here. Your Congresswoman, Gwen Moore, is in the house. Thank you to everyone at the United Community Center for hosting us here today. And as a special treat, your own Milwaukee Bucks are in the house. These are some fine young men. And I told them that as long as they weren't playing the Bulls, I'd root for them. [*Laughter*]

But I want to say how much I appreciate Brent for sharing his story. Please give him a big round of applause. When I received his letter, it made a powerful impact for me because it was so honest about the fact that he wasn't a supporter of mine, which is okay. I just bought him lunch, and I think maybe—[*laughter*]. Of course, I'm term limited, so there's not much I can do now to get a vote. But we hugged it out. [*Laughter*] But for him to be able to express not what only he's going through personally, but also reflect on what that means for the rest of the country and the rest of Wisconsin is extraordinary.

We agree, Brent and I, that the Affordable Care Act is helping a whole lot of people like him. Brent is why we fought so hard to fix a broken health care system in the first place. It wasn't about Democrats or Republicans. It was about our values as Americans and making sure that hard-working Americans like Brent are no longer locked out of health insurance through no fault of their own. It was about the basic idea that in America, health care is not a privilege reserved for the few, but should be a right for all people.

In the 6 years since I signed the Affordable Care Act into law, millions of people have bought affordable health insurance, and many of those bought it for the first time. Last summer, we learned that, for the first time ever, America's uninsured rate has fallen below 10 percent. So this is the lowest rate of uninsured that we've seen since we started keeping these records.

But we know that there are millions more who are eligible for coverage, but haven't gotten it yet. And that's understandable. When you're going about your day-to-day life—going to work, taking care of your kids—you're not paying attention to enrollment deadlines. A lot of people still don't know that most consumers can get covered for less than a hundred dollars a month, less than your cell phone bill or your cable bill. And obviously, there's been a lot of political noise surrounding the Affordable Care Act, so people haven't always known what's true and what's not.

So here's what we did. We started a competition between 20 communities across America—from Philadelphia to Long Beach, from Atlanta to Denver—to see which city could get more of its uninsured neighbors to get covered. And I have to say that the folks who worked on this came up with some pretty clever ways to sign people up. In Seattle, folks held "health care happy hours." [*Laughter*] Now, that's a pretty good trick right there. [*Laughter*] In Nashville, they focused on music festivals. New Orleans created a challenge between barbershops and beauty salons. [*Laughter*] Oakland set up a health care storefront at city hall for folks to visit and shop in.

And I'm pretty proud of my own hometown. Chicago outperformed every other competitor except one. [*Applause*] Except one. Milwaukee came out on top. You get bragging rights this year. Bigger cities may have gotten more folks covered overall, but proportionally, relative to your size, you won out. All told, counting new folks and people renewing their coverage, you got nearly 90,000 people to sign up. That's enough to fill Lambeau Field, still have a big tailgating party with a lot of folks outside. [*Laughter*] And those tailgaters wouldn't have to worry, because Obamacare covers indigestion

from too many brats. [*Laughter*] They'd be covered. [*Laughter*] Okay.

So this city should be proud. You did the best job of looking out for each other and taking care of each other. And I'm here to say congratulations. And what's remarkable is, you did it by working together—elected officials, hospitals, clinics, insurers, faith leaders, community leaders, businesses, nonprofits—everybody stepped up as a team.

And you guys tried everything. Mayor Barrett was out there handing flyers out himself, stuck flyers to people's water bills—[*laughter*]—opened up libraries for enrollment events, set up a partnership with Uber to give folks a ride, covered buses in signs reminding people to sign up. Free clinics and health centers helped low-income residents enroll. Independent insurance agents even volunteered their time to help people choose the best option for them and their families. And some folks were skeptical that insurance was just too expensive, so health care navigators used a cost calculator to help people figure out the most affordable plans.

You worked with TV stations to set up phone banks where viewers could call in and volunteers would help them sign up for coverage. It turns out, they got a lot of calls from moms who wanted to sign up their young adult sons, which, all of you all, listen to your mom. [*Laughter*] She knows what's going on. And let's face it, men are just stupid sometimes—[*laughter*]—don't go to a doctor, don't get checkups. You know.

And because some minority communities were less likely to have signed up, the county worked with the Black Healthcare Coalition to reach out to African Americans. They targeted the Hmong and Latino organizations with culturally appropriate materials, ran ads on Spanish-language radio, made sure folks with disabilities had the information they needed to sign up.

So the story to be told is one of just looking out for each other, just helping each other. This has been an incredible city- and county-wide effort, not just in this competition, but for years. And you've made Milwaukee a model for the Nation, and you're proof that the Affordable Care Act works.

Here's another piece of proof. Today I can announce that thanks to the law, 20 million more Americans now know the security of health insurance. Twenty million. Twenty million people. Twenty million folks like Brent. That includes 6 million young people, who were less likely to be insured before the Affordable Care Act.

As many as 129 million Americans with preexisting conditions can no longer be charged more or denied coverage just because they've been sick. Almost 140 million Americans who already have private insurance, so they didn't need to sign up for Obamacare, they're now guaranteed free preventive care as well, and checkups, mammograms. You're getting more for what you're paying for.

So your insurance is better than it was, even if you don't know it. Even if you didn't vote for me. [*Laughter*] Thanks, Obama. [*Laughter*] It's okay. You got an upgrade.

And contrary to claims that this law would be a job killer, since I've signed it, we've seen steady economic recovery. Our businesses have created jobs every single month starting the month I signed the ACA into law—every month. Seventy-one straight months; 14 million new jobs; unemployment cut from 10 percent to 4.9. [*Applause*] Every month. And because this law fills the gaps in employer-based care, we know that when we change jobs or we lose a job or we go back to school or start that new business, we can still get coverage.

The point was not to replace the coverage that people had if they had a great job and they had great benefits. The idea was, things happen. You lose a job, you're going to find another one, but in the meantime, you don't want to lose your house. Somebody in your family gets sick unexpectedly, you want to make sure that they're getting the best of care. That's what insurance is. And the Affordable Care Act is saving lives, not just for folks like Brent, but also because the law is encouraging hospitals to focus on quality of care.

One of the—these are the kinds of things that, they don't make headlines, but since we

signed this law, we've seen a big drop in folks getting infections at hospital and other improvements in hospital care. That leads to some 87,000 fewer deaths and $20 billion in cost savings.

And the Affordable Care Act is saving money. Most folks shopping in the new marketplace have discovered that they can buy a plan for less than 75 bucks a month. Last year, 90,000 Wisconsin seniors on Medicare saved an average of more than a thousand dollars on their prescription drugs, thanks to the Affordable Care Act. And we've been moving Medicare toward a payment model that rewards quality of care over quantity of care. And that means, we want doctors and hospitals to focus on giving folks the right tests and the right treatment, not just trying to sell more tests and sell more treatments. And that delivers better outcomes. We've just learned we've already hit our initial goal of getting 30 percent of Medicare payments into this new model that's better for patients.

So the Affordable Care Act—a.k.a. Obamacare—[*laughter*]—it's saving lives, and it's saving money. And we've done all this while creating millions of new jobs. We've cut our deficits by almost 75 percent. The act itself has cost less than the original projections. And meantime, health care price inflation is at its lowest level in 50 years. So even if you aren't covered by Obamacare, your premiums or your employer's premiums or your share of premiums have increased at a slower rate over these last 3 years than they had in the previous 50, which doesn't mean that you're not still seeing some increases, and you may not be happy about that, but understand that we've actually significantly reduced the pace at which it was going up.

And look, you wouldn't know any of this if you listened to the politicians on the other side out there about this who are obsessed with repealing this law. To them, the facts I just mentioned don't matter, because this is an issue of ideology. This has to do with, we just—"we're just against it." Facts, evidence don't comport with their conviction that the ACA means an end to the American way. And "Repeal" has been a rallying cry. And they say they want to replace, but they still haven't come up with a replacement, partly because we designed this plan with the help of a bunch of Republican thinkers, including the then-Governor of Massachusetts. This is the plan that they signed into law there.

Congressional Republicans have tried and failed to repeal or undermine it about 60 times. They've told you what they'd replace it with about zero times. [*Laughter*] They sure won't tell you what would happen if they actually did repeal it. If they got their way, 20 million people will have their insurance taken away from them. Twenty million people.

And by the way, Milwaukee, while you worked your tails off to cover enough folks to fill Lambeau Field, your Governor still refuses to expand Medicaid in this State. And we could cover another 21,000 Wisconsinites with a stroke of his pen. He could join 31 other Governors who are taking this option, which, by the way, actually would save money. He's denying Wisconsinites their ticket to health insurance, and it's political.

Your senior Senator won't tell you that if he gets his way and repeals Obamacare, millions of working families would see their insurance premiums spike. The leader of the Republicans in Congress, who lives just south of here, won't tell you that if he gets his way and repeals Obamacare, millions of women would go back to paying higher premiums just because they're women. Millions of seniors would see the price of their prescription drugs shoot up.

Now, they'll tell you, no, those are the good parts, we'd keep those. Well, if you add it all up, that's the Affordable Care Act. Why are you trying to repeal it? Why is it exactly that you're trying to repeal?

No, this is an important point. See, people don't know that, for example, kids being covered until they're 26 or making sure that you can't be discriminated against because of a preexisting condition or making sure that women aren't being discriminated against when it comes to health insurance or free preventive care or seniors getting reduced prices on their

prescriptions drugs, they don't know necessarily that those things are part of this law.

So when you ask Republicans about these things, they'll say, well, yes, those are okay, we just want to repeal the other parts. As I said, when you add it up, that's the law. Why do you want to repeal it?

We can't let that happen. It has been 6 years since I signed the Affordable Care Act into law. This is no longer just about a law. It's not about me. It's not about politics. This is about the reality that somebody like Brent goes through. I get letters every day, and people describe to me what it meant for them to have health care coverage. Now, if you're healthy at the moment, you may not think about it. But at some point, each of us goes through times where things don't work out that great, and you've got to have a backup plan.

Once you get out of Washington, most Americans support the reality that they don't want people not having coverage. The vast majority of folks like their coverage. The vast majority of folks are satisfied with their choices of doctors and hospitals. People like what we've done, the people who are actually using it. Not just the people who are hearing about it on Fox News, I'm talking about people who are actually using it.

For all the years of political fighting, all the repeal votes, all the predictions of apocalypse, the reality is that real people are finally getting insurance and having a bridge to stay insured as they go through various changes in their lives. That's taking place in places like this, in Milwaukee: real communities looking out for each other.

Now, we are going to keep working to make health care work even better. There are things that I would love to work with the Republicans on in the closing months of my Presidency to fine-tune this thing and identify ways that we can improve quality even more and reduce prices even more. We could certainly get more folks covered who are currently being left out. We've got to keep working to get Governors and State legislators to expand Medicaid and take care of their citizens. We've got to keep working to make prescription drugs more affordable.

But, Milwaukee, you have proved that what Americans care about most is not scoring political points, it's looking after each another. You've made a difference in people's lives. We're not going backwards. We're not going to go back to a time where people could be denied because of preexisting conditions. That's not who we are. That's who we were; that's not who we are now. Americans know that.

Earlier today I had lunch at the Engine Company with Brent and a few others who had written me letters. I get 10 letters ever night, I read them, keeps me connected to the people I'm supposed to be serving on a day-to-day basis. And one of the people who wrote to me was a woman name Karen George. A few years ago, while Karen was finishing her law degree, her husband was laid off for the second time in 6 years. The first time, they lost their health insurance, they had no choice but to get on what's called COBRA. But as you know, that's a really expensive transition plan, and they could barely afford it.

This time, they had the Affordable Care Act on their side. By dinnertime, Karen had signed up her family for an affordable plan in the new health insurance marketplace. So she knew they were safe. They were protected. They were covered. And Karen said in her letter, she said: "When something like a layoff happens, you face a collection of moments of panic. To have one of those moments of panic go away was something. Right then, our health care was there when we needed it."

Soon after that came another moment of panic. Just one week after graduating law school, Karen experienced chest pains, ended up in the ER with what turned out to be a heart problem. "Without this plan," she wrote, "I probably would have tried to take a nap and wait for the pain to go away." But instead, Karen got the care she needed. And Karen's kids have their mom.

That's because of your efforts. Because of you, America is moving closer to the day where every American family has that same peace of mind. So we've got more work to do. But

you've shown us that when ordinary citizens come together as one family and one community and roll up our sleeves and look out for one another, that's when change happens. That's when we're at our best. That's how we're going to keep building a country that lives up to its highest ideals. I could not be prouder of you. Congratulations.

God bless you, Milwaukee. God bless these United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:54 p.m. in the Jack Ladky Gymnasium at the Bruce-Guadalupe Middle School on the campus of the United Community Center. In his remarks, he referred to Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele; Mosinee, WI, resident Brent Brown, who introduced the President; former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts; Gov. Scott K. Walker of Wisconsin; Sen. Ronald H. Johnson; Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul D. Ryan; Springfield, IL, resident Karen George and Milwaukee, WI, residents Karen and Sharon Szyszko and Susan W. Campbell, who had written to the President about their positive experiences with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; and Joe George, husband of Mrs. George, and their children Nate and Katie.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Venezuela
March 3, 2016

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13692 of March 8, 2015, with respect to the situation in Venezuela is to continue in effect beyond March 8, 2016.

The situation in Venezuela described in Executive Order 13692 has not improved, including the Government of Venezuela's erosion of human rights guarantees, persecution of political opponents, curtailment of press freedoms, use of violence and human rights violations and abuses in response to antigovernment protests, and arbitrary arrest and detention of antigovernment protestors, as well as the exacerbating presence of significant government corruption. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13692 with respect to the situation in Venezuela.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Paul D. Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on the National Economy
March 4, 2016

Well, I thought it might be useful to take a small break from the spectacle of the political season—and now, I gather, O.J.—to focus on something that really matters to the American people, and that is, how is the economy doing, and how is it affecting their lives?

This morning we learned that the U.S. economy had created 242,000 jobs last month. That's 2 months in a row at the unemployment

rate of below 5 percent. And, over the past 3 months, our workforce has grown by 1.5 million people. That is progress.

Overall, America's business has now created new jobs for 72 straight months, 6 straight years of job creation: 14.3 million new jobs. In fact, our businesses have created jobs every single month since I signed that job-killing Obamacare bill. [*Laughter*]

Think about this: If somebody had told us 7 years ago that we'd get to this point, at a time when we were losing 800,000 jobs a month and the unemployment rate hit 10 percent, we wouldn't have believed them. But today, America's businesses are creating jobs at the fastest pace since the 1990s. America's workforce is growing at the fastest pace since the year 2000. It is showing the kind of strength and durability that makes America's economy right now the envy of the world despite the enormous headwinds that it's receiving because of weaknesses in other parts of the world.

In other words, the numbers, the facts don't lie. And I think it's useful, given that there seems to be an alternative reality out there from the—some of the political folks that America is down in the dumps. It's not. America is pretty darn great right now and making strides right now. And small businesses and large businesses alike are hiring right now and investing right now and building this country brick by brick, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood, all across the country.

And I don't expect that these facts and this evidence will convince some of the politicians out there to change their doomsday rhetoric, talking about how terrible America is. But the American people should be proud of what they have achieved, because this speaks to their resilience, innovation, creativity, risk-taking, and grit.

The fact of the matter is, is that the plans that we have put in place to grow the economy have worked. They would work even faster if we did not have the kind of obstruction that we've seen in this town to prevent additional policies that would make a difference. And there is going to be a debate going on around the budget in the coming months. Republicans in Congress are, sadly, trying to cut some of the investments that could spur additional growth. They are blocking things like an increase in the minimum wage or more robust investment in jobs training, infrastructure, education that can continue to lift up wages and incomes, an area, by the way, where we are not seeing the same kinds of pace that we want to see, and where, if we're working together, we could be making a difference.

That's what we should be debating. That's the debate that is worthy of the American people. Not fantasy. Not name-calling. Not trying to talk down the American economy, but looking at the facts, understanding that we've made extraordinary progress in job growth; how can we continue to advance that; how can we make sure that people are successful in climbing the ladder of wage and income growth over the coming years; how do we make sure that we make this economy grow even faster.

And so the kinds of proposals that we've put forward repeatedly in terms of rebuilding our infrastructure, improving our job training system, lifting the minimum wage, dealing with things like family leave and paid leave, making sure that retirement accounts are more helpful to middle class families and working families, making college more affordable—those are all the things that are really going to make an enormous difference. We've got to continue to push that agenda. That's what we should be talking about. And that's what I'm going to be talking about with my economic team here in the coming months.

The notion that we would reverse the very policies that helped dig us out of a recession, reinstitute those that got us into a hole—plans that are being currently proposed by Republicans in Congress and by some of the candidates for President—that's not the conversation we should be having. That's not the direction America should take. And I'm looking forward to very forcefully making clear that what we have done has made a difference and that there's a huge gap between the rhetoric that's going on out there and the reality of success that we're seeing in America's economy, even

as we acknowledge that there's more work that can be done to make sure that everybody is benefiting from that success. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody. Have a good weekend.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:20 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Orenthal James "O.J." Simpson, former running back, National Football League's Buffalo Bills.

The President's Weekly Address
March 5, 2016

Hi, everybody. One of the things that makes America so strong is our spirit of innovation: our drive to invent and harness new technologies to tackle our greatest challenges. It's how we won the race to invent the lightbulb and the Internet; it's why we were first to the Moon and Mars. It's why I keep models of American inventions like the telegraph in the Oval Office. It's a daily reminder of the genius that's embedded in our DNA: the way we've always shaped the future through our ideas and discoveries.

That's truer than ever today, with the constant stream of new apps and tools and data that are still changing the way we live: from getting a ride to paying our bills to developing smarter ways to combat climate change.

That's why, next week, I'll travel to Austin, Texas, to visit South by Southwest. It's an annual gathering of some of our most creative thinkers, coders, makers, and entrepreneurs from across the country. And while I'm there, I'm going to ask everyone for ideas and technologies that can help update our Government and our democracy to be as modern and dynamic as America itself.

This has been a goal of mine since before I was President. On my campaign in 2008, we saw how technology could bring people together and help them engage as citizens in their own communities. So when I came to the White House, I wanted apply that experience to the Federal Government. It hasn't always been easy. And we've had some bumps along the way.

But we've also made good progress. Over the past few years, for example, we've done something that Government never has. We asked some of the sharpest minds from companies in Silicon Valley and across the country to come help us modernize the Federal Government for the way we live today. And they came ready to serve, tackling some of our biggest challenges, like high-tech special ops units.

These teams are partnering with the Government's existing policy and technical experts to reimagine the way we do business and deliver services that work better and cost less. Already, we've made it easier for students to find the college that's right for them, for immigrants to track the green card and naturalization process online, for veterans to access their medical records. And yes, after an initial false start, we've made it much easier for tens of millions of Americans to compare and buy health insurance and the peace of mind that goes with it.

That's what this is all about: making sure our Government of the people and by the people works better for the people in the 21st century. It's about Americans working together to make a real difference in people's lives. Because the easiest thing to do is to blame Government for our problems. Some people have made a career out of that. But our Founders trusted us with the keys to this system of self-government because it's the best tool we've got to settle our differences and solve our collective challenges. And it's only as good as we make it.

That's why I'm going to Austin and South by Southwest: to keep asking everyone from all walks of life, working inside or outside of Government, to help us make this democracy even stronger. And I hope you join us.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:05 p.m. on March 4 in the East Room at the White House for broadcast on

March 5. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 4, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 5. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of Former First Lady Nancy Davis Reagan
March 6, 2016

Nancy Reagan once wrote that nothing could prepare you for living in the White House. She was right, of course. But we had a head start, because we were fortunate to benefit from her proud example and her warm and generous advice.

Our former First Lady redefined the role in her time here. Later, in her long goodbye with President Reagan, she became a voice on behalf of millions of families going through the depleting, aching reality of Alzheimer's and took on a new role, as advocate, on behalf of treatments that hold the potential and the promise to improve and save lives.

We offer our sincere condolences to their children, Patti, Ron, and Michael, and to their grandchildren. And we remain grateful for Nancy Reagan's life, thankful for her guidance, and prayerful that she and her beloved husband are together again.

NOTE: The statement referred to Patti Davis, daughter of former First Lady Reagan. The statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as a statement by the President and the First Lady. The related proclamation of March 7 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Meeting on Financial Regulatory Reform and an Exchange With Reporters
March 7, 2016

The President. Well, I just had an opportunity to meet with our independent financial regulators to discuss the progress that we've made on our economy since the financial crisis. This is something that I've done on a regular basis. It's worth remembering that it was 8 years ago this month that Bear Stearns collapsed. And that was a key moment in an economic spiral that eventually cost millions of Americans home values, pensions, jobs, savings. It was devastating.

And it is a useful reminder of what happens when you have lax regulation on Wall Street. Eventually, it migrates to Main Street. And so irresponsible, risky bets with inadequate safeguards and that reward executives who take those risks greatly can cause enormous damage to our economy overall.

As we worked to recover from this crisis, we've also worked to prevent this crisis from happening again. And Wall Street reform—Dodd-Frank—the laws that we passed have worked. I want to emphasize this because it is popular in the media, in political discourse—both on the left and the right—to suggest that the crisis happened and nothing changed. That is not true. Let me repeat that. In fact, we went at financial regulation very hard to guard against another era of "too big to fail" and some of the systemic disruptions that occurred because of lax regulation. It has helped us crack down on irresponsible behavior. We have seen banks that now have much greater capital, as much as $700 billion worth of additional capital, additional cushion inside of our financial system.

We have put in place requirements so that if you have a financial institution that is on the brink of collapse, we can engage in an orderly unwinding of that institution without having taxpayers forced to come in and bail it out. We have made sure that the monitoring and the reporting by these institutions is much more stringent than it used to be. We are moving in

the derivatives sector a huge amount of oversight and regulation. And now you have clearinghouses that account for the vast majority of trades taking place so that we know if and when somebody is doing something that they shouldn't be doing, if they're overleveraged in ways that could pose larger dangers to the financial system.

We created a Consumer Financial Protection Bureau that has been very effective in cracking down on some of the dishonest predatory practices that financial institutions were engaging in and that, in part, led to the crisis in 2007 and 2008.

So I want to dispel the notion that exists both on the left and on the right that somehow, after the crisis, nothing happened. In fact, if you look at the speech that I gave at Cooper Union in 2008 addressing this issue, we are, by the end of this year, likely to have achieved all the goals that we set out in terms of firming up the financial system, making it much more secure, and making sure that some of the excesses, recklessness, and dangers that took place can't occur in the future.

The second thing that I want to correct for the record is the notion that somehow this would hurt business and the economy. In fact, the opposite has happened. Our businesses have created jobs every single month since this law was signed. Over the past 6 years, it created more than 15 [14]* million new jobs in all.

And because of Wall Street reform, our financial system is safer and stronger than it was before the crisis. It is much better equipped to withstand any systemic blows that may occur not just within our borders, but in the international financial system generally. So we did not just rebuild this, we rebuilt it better and we rebuilt it stronger.

Now, that doesn't mean that there's not still work to do. One of the things that we discussed was the fact that there is a shadow banking system, a set of institutions that under current law aren't always regulated in the same way that banks are regulated: hedge funds, asset managers, et cetera. And one of our projects is to make sure that we are covering some of those potential gaps. We may need at some point help from Congress to do that. But in the meantime, the joint Committee of these agencies has been working very effectively to try to monitor some of those areas that are outside the traditional banking system.

We still have work to do to complete regulations related to executive compensation to make sure that individuals who are working in these financial institutions are less incentivized to take big, reckless risks that could end up harming our financial sector overall.

And we also spent a lot of time talking about cybersecurity, an area where there's going to be increasing vulnerability. And as part of my Cybersecurity National Action Plan, we have already seen these independent regulators working together with Treasury and with the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies to start tightening up our financial sector and to identify those areas where we might be weak and might be vulnerable.

So there's going to continue to be a lot of work to do. The financial system operates very quickly. It is innovative. There is a lot of technology involved. And so the task for regulators is challenging because it's a moving target; it doesn't stay static.

But these institutions have worked really hard and overall, undoubtedly, have made our financial system much better. So when you read articles, whether on the left or the right, that suggest somehow nothing happened and everybody just went back to the same go-go years that they were engaging in before, those are factually incorrect. They're not true. And the reason I want to emphasize that is because when there's a perception that nothing happened and that feeds cynicism, that actually weakens our ability then to make further progress in regulating this sector.

A lot of work has been done by a lot of really smart, dedicated people to try to make this system work better. And we've made vast improvements, and we now have to build on that.

* White House correction.

Last point I would make: If there is a significant challenge in terms of regulating Wall Street and regulating our financial sector, it is primarily coming from certain Members of Congress who are consistently pressuring independent regulators to back off; who want to strip away the authorities that were granted under Dodd-Frank; who tried to weaken those regulations, tried to water them down, or tried to starve these regulators of the resources and the budgets that they need to hire enough personnel to track everything that's taking place in the financial sector.

So whether you are a Democrat or a Republican or a Tea Party member or a Socialist, if you are concerned about making sure that Wall Street is doing the right thing, check to make sure that your Member of Congress is not trying to cut the budgets of these various agencies, starve them of the resources that they need, or roll back some of the authorities that were created during Dodd-Frank.

That should be the target of your concern and your wrath. Because unless we have strong, independent agencies like this that can provide the oversight that's necessary, it is absolutely true that these financial institutions with enormous resources and mountains of lawyers and accountants and analysts will run circles around the Government and will end up engaging once again in the kinds of disruptive behavior that caused so much damage to so many people in the first place. So that's where everybody should be focused.

And let's make sure that as you reporters are doing your work in this area, shine a spotlight on who is it that's trying to weaken Wall Street reform and regulations and who's trying to strengthen them; who's trying to strip out budgets and who's trying to add additional resources to make sure that we're doing the job. And the American people should take some comfort from the fact that the people around this table, at least, have been working really hard and they've actually made some really significant progress.

We've got more work to do. And there are a whole set of issues that fall outside the issues of this regulatory body in terms of making sure that folks on Wall Street are also paying their taxes and that the tax structure is fair. And that gets into a whole other set of arguments that I may make at another press announcement.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

Death of Former First Lady Nancy Davis Reagan

Q. Any comments for the camera on Nancy Reagan?

The President. I had the opportunity to meet Mrs. Reagan once. Obviously, she was already advanced in age, but could not have been more gracious and more charming to myself and Michelle when we first came into office. I think it's been well documented the extraordinary love that she had for her husband and the extraordinary comfort and strength that she provided him during really hard times. As somebody who has been lucky enough to have an extraordinary partner in my life as well, I know how much she meant not just to President Reagan, but to the country as a whole. He was lucky to have her, and I'm sure he'd be the first to acknowledge that. So she will be missed.

All right?

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:08 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Statement on International Women's Day
March 8, 2016

Today, on International Women's Day, we recommit ourselves to achieving a world in which every woman and girl enjoys the full range of rights and freedoms that is her birthright.

Women and girls make extraordinary contributions every day across all fields of human endeavor, including in business, education, sports, art, science, agriculture, parenting, and governance. Without these contributions, economies would collapse, communities would fail, and families would fall apart. And yet, in too many places around the world, women still

struggle to rise out of their status as second-class citizens. They are denied opportunities for full economic and political participation. Some are forced to marry and have children when they are still children themselves, while abusive practices, such female genital mutilation/cutting, still persist in too many places. Moreover, secondary education—arguably the most powerful tool for helping girls escape cycles of poverty and abuse and take control of their lives—remains beyond the reach of tens of millions of girls around the world.

That is why I am proud that my administration launched the "Let Girls Learn" initiative, which is already helping adolescent girls around the world to surmount the barriers that stand between them and a quality education. It is also why I am pleased to announce that, in the coming days, Secretary of State John Kerry will be releasing the U.S. Global Strategy To Empower Adolescent Girls, which lays out a whole-of-Government approach to provide the next generation of women the tools they need to pursue their aspirations.

We know that when we invest in women and girls, we are not only helping them, we are helping the entire planet. A future in which all women and girls around the world are allowed to rise and achieve their full potential will be a brighter, more peaceful, and more prosperous future for us all.

Statement on the Vermont Legislature's Passage of Legislation Requiring Employers To Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees
March 9, 2016

I commend Governor Peter Shumlin and the State of Vermont for taking action to provide paid sick leave for Vermont's working families. This action means thousands of families will no longer have to choose between losing income and taking care of a sick child. It's a choice no one should have to make. So I'm once again calling on Congress to help us catch up with other advanced nations and provide this basic security to all Americans. Until Congress acts, I urge other States to follow Vermont's lead. And I'll continue to do everything I can as President to support working families, because it's the right thing to do to give everyone a fair shot to get ahead.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran
March 9, 2016

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to Iran that was declared on March 15, 1995, is to continue in effect beyond March 15, 2016.

On July 14, 2015, the P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), the European Union, and Iran reached a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to ensure that Iran's nuclear program is and will remain exclusively peaceful. January 16, 2016, marked Implementation Day under the JCPOA, when the International Atomic Energy Agency issued a report verifying that Iran had completed key nuclear-related steps as specified in the JCPOA, and the

Secretary of State confirmed the report's findings. As a result, the United States lifted nuclear-related sanctions on Iran consistent with its commitments under the JCPOA, including the termination of a number of Executive Orders that were issued pursuant to this national emergency. Though such lifting of nuclear-related sanctions constitutes a significant change in our sanctions posture, non-nuclear related sanctions remain in place.

Nevertheless, certain actions and policies of the Government of Iran are contrary to the interests of the United States in the region and continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to Iran and to maintain in force certain sanctions against Iran to respond to this threat.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Paul D. Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony for Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada
March 10, 2016

President Obama. Good morning, everybody.

Audience members. Good morning!

President Obama. Bonjour. On behalf of the American people, on behalf of Michelle and myself, it is my honor to welcome to the United States Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Mrs. Grégoire-Trudeau, their beautiful children, and the quite good-looking Canadian delegation.

It's long been said that you can choose your friends, but you cannot choose your neighbors. [*Laughter*] Well, by virtue of geography, the United States and Canada are blessed to be neighbors. And by choice, we are steadfast allies and the closest of friends. The truth is, though, we don't express this enough, in part because of our national characters. Our Canadian friends can be more reserved, more easygoing. We Americans can be a little louder, more boisterous. And as a result, we haven't always conveyed how much we treasure our alliance and our ties with our Canadian friends. And that's why, today, we are very proud to welcome the first official visit by a Canadian Prime Minister in nearly 20 years. It's about time, eh? [*Laughter*]

And what a beautiful day it is, which is a little unfair. As President, my very first foreign trip was to Canada: to Ottawa in February. [*Laughter*] In the snow. Still, our friends from the great white north gave me a very warm welcome. Mr. Prime Minister, we hope to reciprocate some of that warmth today, with your first official visit south of the border.

We're joined today by proud Canadian Americans. We are family. And this is also a special day for the many Canadians who live and work here in America and who enrich our lives every day. We don't always realize it, but so often, that neighbor, that coworker, that member of the White House staff, some of our favorite artists and performers, they're Canadian! [*Laughter*] They sneak up on you. [*Laughter*]

Even as we remember what makes us unique, Americans and Canadians, we see ourselves in each other. We're guided by the same values, including our conviction that the blessings we cherish as free people are not gifts to be taken for granted, but are precious freedoms that have to be defended anew by every generation. Americans and Canadians—our brave men and women in uniform—have paid the price together across a century of sacrifice, from the poppy fields of Flanders to the rugged mountains of Afghanistan. As NATO allies, we stand united against terrorism and for the

rights of nations like Ukraine to determine their own destiny. As leaders at the United Nations, we stand up for peace and security and the human rights of all people.

Our shared values also guide us at home. I'm proud to be the first American President to stand with a Canadian Prime Minister and be able to say that, in both our nations, health care is not a privilege for a few, but is now a right for all. And as two vast and vibrant societies, we reaffirm that our diversity is our strength, whether your family was among the first native peoples to live on these lands or refugees we welcomed just yesterday; whether you pray in a church or a synagogue or a temple or a mosque; where, no matter what Province or State you live in, you have the freedom to marry the person that you love.

Now, I don't want to gloss over the very real differences between Americans and Canadians. There are some things we will probably never agree on: whose beer is better. [*Laughter*] Who's better at hockey.

Audience member. Royals! [*Laughter*]

Audience member. We are. We are. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Trudeau. Don't get me started. Don't get me started. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. Where's the Stanley Cup right now?

Audience members. Ooh!

President Obama. I'm sorry. Is it in my hometown with the Chicago Blackhawks? In case you were wondering. In case you Canadians were wondering, where is it?

Audience member. Raptors!

The President. [*Laughter*] And this visit is special for another reason. Nearly 40 years ago, on another March morning, another American President welcomed another Canadian Prime Minister here to the White House. That day, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau said that the United States is "Canada's best friend and ally." And one of the reasons, he said, is that we have "a common outlook on the world." Today Prime Minister Justin Trudeau carries on this work.

Mr. Prime Minister, your election and the first few months in office have brought a new energy and dynamism not only to Canada, but to the relationship between our nations. We have a common outlook on the world. And I have to say, I have never seen so many Americans so excited about the visit of a Canadian Prime Minister.

So with this visit, I believe that the United States and Canada can do even more together: even more to promote the trade and economic partnerships that provide good jobs and opportunities for our people; even more to ensure the security that so many Americans and Canadians count on so that they can live in safety and freedom; even more to protect our countries and our communities—especially in the Arctic—from climate change, just as we acted together at Paris to reach the most ambitious agreement in history to fight climate change. And guided by our values, we can do even more together to advance human development around the world—from saving a child from a preventable disease to giving a student in Africa electricity to study by—because, as Americans and Canadians, we believe in the inherent dignity of every human being.

As always, our work as nations remains rooted in the friendship between our peoples. And we see that every day in communities along our shared border. Up in Hyder, Alaska, folks head across the border to celebrate Canada Day, and folks in Stewart, British Columbia, come over for the Fourth of July. At the baseball diamond in Coutts, Alberta, if you hit a home run, there's a good chance the ball will land in Sweetgrass, Montana. [*Laughter*] And up where Derby Line, Vermont, meets Stanstead, Quebec, Americans and Canadians come together at the local library where the border line literally runs right across the floor. A resident of one of these border towns once said, we're two different countries, but we're like one big town and "people are always there for you."

So, Prime Minister Trudeau—Justin, Sophie—to all our Canadian friends: We are two different countries, but days like this remind us that we're like one big town. And we reaffirm that Americans and Canadians will always be there for each other. Welcome to the United States. *Bienvenue, mes amis.*

Prime Minister Trudeau. Mr. President, First Lady, distinguished guests, friends, ladies and gentlemen: Thank you for this extraordinary welcome. Thank you so much for inviting Sophie and me and, through us, all of Canada to join with you on this spectacular morning. Thank you very much. Sophie and I, along with our entire delegation, are honored and touched by your magnificent hospitality and by the reinforcement of just how powerful you are, Mr. President, to organize such a perfect day for us. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in French, and no translation was provided. He then continued in English as follows.*]

You may recall that our Government was elected on a plan to strengthen the middle class. We have an ambitious innovation agenda as we realize that revitalizing our economy will require investing in new ideas and new technologies. Our plan will foster emerging industries, create good jobs, and increase our global competitiveness. That was the Canadian plan, and of course, it very much resembles the challenges and the solutions that you've been putting forward here south of the border, a plan to invest in our country and invest in our people. And it's wonderful to see that our American friends and partners share and are working on the exact same objectives.

See, as our leading trading partner and closest ally, the relationship between our two countries has always been vital. As an exporting nation, Canada is always eager to work closely to reduce trade barriers between our countries. And speaking of exports, we know with certainty that there's a high demand for Canadian goods down here. A few that come to mind that President Obama just rightly recognized as being extraordinary contributors to the American success story is Jonathan Toews, Keith—Duncan Keith, and Patrick Sharp of the Chicago Blackhawks.

We've faced many challenges over the course of our shared history. And while we have agreed on many things and disagreed on a few others, we remain united in a common purpose, allies, partners, and friends as we tackle the world's great challenges. Whether we're charting a course for environmental protection, making key investments to grow our middle class, or defending the rights of oppressed peoples abroad, Canada and the United States will always collaborate in partnership and good faith. The history may be complex, but the bottom line is clear: There is no relationship in the entire world like the Canada-U.S. relationship.

Our great countries have been friends a long time. We grew up together. And like all great enduring friendships, at our best, we bring out the best in one another. And through it all, our enormous shared accomplishments speak for themselves: prosperous, free, diverse societies that have shaped history together.

We could not be prouder of that past. And on behalf of 36 million Canadians, I thank you all for your warm welcome. Now let's get to work on shaping our shared future.

Merci beaucoup.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:22 a.m. on the South Grounds at the White House, where Prime Minister Trudeau was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. In his remarks, he referred to Sophie Grégoire-Trudeau, wife of Prime Minister Trudeau, and their children Xavier, Ella-Grace, and Hadrien Trudeau; and former President Jimmy Carter. Prime Minister Trudeau referred to Patrick Sharp, left wing, National Hockey League's Dallas Stars.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada
March 10, 2016

President Obama. Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Well, once again, I want to welcome Prime Minister Trudeau to the White House. We just completed a very productive

meeting. Although I regret to inform you that we still have not reached agreement on hockey. [*Laughter*] But it is not interfering with the rest of our bilateral relationship. [*Laughter*]

As I said earlier, this visit reflects something we Americans don't always say enough, and that is, how much we value our great alliance and partnership with our friends up north. We're woven together so deeply—as societies, as economies—that it's sometimes easy to forget how truly remarkable our relationship is. A shared border—more than 5,000 miles—that is the longest between any two nations in the world. Every day, we do some $2 billion in trade and investment, and that's the largest bilateral economic relationship in the world. Every day, more than 400,000 Americans and Canadians cross the border: workers, businesspeople, students, tourists, neighbors. And of course, every time we have a Presidential election, our friends to the north have to brace for an exodus of Americans who swear they'll move to Canada if the guy from the other party wins. [*Laughter*] And so—but typically, it turns out fine. [*Laughter*]

This is now my second meeting with Justin. I'm grateful that I have him as a partner. We've got a common outlook on what our nations can achieve together. He campaigned on a message of hope and of change. His positive and optimistic vision is inspiring young people. At home, he's governing with a commitment to inclusivity and equality. On the world stage, his country is leading on climate change, and he cares deeply about development. So, from my perspective, what's not to like?

Of course, no two nations agree on everything. Our countries are no different. But in terms of our interests, our values, how we approach the world, few countries match up the way the United States and Canada do. And given our work together today, I can say—and I believe the Prime Minister would agree—that when it comes to the central challenges that we face, our two nations are more closely aligned than ever.

We want to make it easier to trade and invest with one another. America is already the top destination for Canadian exports, and Canada is the top market for U.S. exports, which support about 1.7 million good-paying American jobs. When so many of our products, like autos, are built on both sides of the border in an integrated supply chain, this coproduction makes us more competitive in the global economy as a whole. And we want to keep it that way.

So we've instructed our teams to stay focused on making it even easier for goods and people to move back and forth across the borders, including reducing bottlenecks and streamlining regulations. We discussed how to move forward with the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and today we also reaffirmed our determination to move ahead with an agreement to preclear travelers through immigration and customs, making it even easier for Canadians and Americans to travel and visit and do business together.

As NATO allies, we're united against the threat of terrorism. Canada is an extraordinarily valued member of the global coalition fighting ISIL, tripling its personnel to help train and advise forces in Iraq, stepping up its intelligence efforts in the region, and providing critical humanitarian support. We're working closely together to prevent the flow of foreign fighters, and today we agreed to share more information—including with respect to our no-fly lists and full implementation of our entry-exit system—even as we uphold the privacy and civil liberties of our respective citizens.

In Syria, the cessation of hostilities has led to a measurable drop in violence in the civil war, and the United States and Canada continue to be leaders in getting humanitarian aid to Syrians who are in desperate need. Meanwhile, our two countries continue to safely welcome refugees from that conflict. And I want to commend Justin and the Canadian people once again for their compassionate leadership on this front.

I'm especially pleased to say the United States and Canada are fully united in combating climate change. As the first U.S. President to visit the Arctic, I saw how both of our nations are threatened by rising seas, melting permafrost, disappearing glaciers and sea ice.

And so we are focusing on making sure the Paris Agreement is fully implemented, and we're working to double our investments in clean energy research and development.

Today we're also announcing some new steps. Canada is joining us in our aggressive goal to bring down methane emissions in the oil and gas sectors in both of our countries, and together, we're going to move swiftly to establish comprehensive standards to meet that goal. We're also going to work together to phase down HFCs and to limit carbon emissions from international aviation. We're announcing a new climate and science partnership to protect the Arctic and its people. And later this year, I'll welcome our partners, including Canada, to our White House science ministerial on the Arctic to deepen our cooperation in this vital region.

We're also grateful for Canada's partnership as we renew America's leadership across the hemisphere. Mr. Prime Minister, I want to thank you for Canada's continuing support for our new chapter of engagement with the Cuban people, which I will continue with my upcoming visit to Cuba next week. We're going to work to help Colombia achieve peace and remove the deadly legacy of landmines there. And our scientists and public health professionals will work with partners across the hemisphere to prevent the spread of the Zika virus and work together actively for diagnostic and vaccines that can make a real difference.

And finally, our shared values—our commitment to human development and dignity of all people—continue to guide our work as global partners. Through the Global Health Security Agenda, we're stepping up our efforts to prevent outbreaks of diseases from becoming epidemics. We are urgently working to help Ethiopia deal with the worst drought in half a century. Today our spouses, Michelle and Sophie, are reaffirming our commitment to the health and education of young women and girls around the world. And Canada will be joining our Power Africa initiative to bring electricity—including renewable energy—to homes and businesses across the continent and help lift people out of poverty. And those are our values at work.

So again, Justin, I want to thank you for your partnership. I believe we've laid a foundation for even greater cooperation for our countries for years to come. And I'd like to think that it is only the beginning. I look forward to welcoming you back for the Nuclear Security Summit in a few weeks. I'm pleased that we were able to announce that the next North American Leaders' Summit that will be in Canada this summer. The Prime Minister has invited me to address the Canadian Parliament, and that's a great honor. I look forward to the opportunity to speak directly to the Canadian people about the extraordinary future that we can build together.

Prime Minister Trudeau.

Prime Minister Trudeau. Thank you, Mr. President.

Good morning, everyone. It's an honor to be here. As I've reflected on the storied relationship between our two great countries, I constantly return to President Kennedy's wise words on our friendship that "what unites us is far greater than what divides us." And as President Obama mentioned earlier, if geography made us neighbors, then shared values made us kindred spirits, and it is our choices, individually and collectively, that make us friends.

That friendship, matched by much hard work, has allowed us to do great things throughout our history, from the beaches of Normandy to the free trade agreement and now, today, on climate change. The President and I share a common goal: We want a clean-growth economy that continues to provide good jobs and great opportunities for all of our citizens. And I'm confident that by working together, we'll get there sooner than we think.

Let's take the Paris Agreement, for example. That agreement is both a symbolic declaration of global cooperation on climate change, as well as a practical guide for growing our economies in a responsible and sustainable way. Canada and the U.S. have committed to signing the agreement as soon as possible. We know that our international partners expect

and, indeed, need leadership from us on this issue.

The President and I have announced today that we'll take ambitious action to reduce methane emissions nearly by half from the oil and gas sector, reduce use and emissions of hydrofluorocarbons, and implement aligned greenhouse gas emission standards for heavy-duty vehicles, amongst other plans to fight climate change.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Trudeau. We also announced a new partnership aiming to develop a sustainable economy in the Arctic. This partnership foresees new standards based on scientific data, from fishing in the high seas of the Arctic, as well as new standards to ensure maritime transport with less emissions. The partnership will also promote sustainable development in the region, in addition to putting the bar higher in terms of preserving the biodiversity in the Arctic.

We have also decided to make our borders both more open and more safe by agreeing of preclearing at the Billy Bishop Airport in Toronto and the Jean Lesage Airport in Quebec, as well as the railroad stations in Montreal and Vancouver. Moreover, we're creating a U.S.-Canada working group in the next 60 days on the recourses to access how we will resolve errors of identity on the no-fly list.

[*Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in English as follows.*]

Prime Minister Trudeau. The President and I acknowledge the fundamental and wholly unique economic relationship between Canada and the United States. We have, historically, been each other's largest trading partners. Each and every day, over $2.4 billion worth of goods and services cross the border. Today we reaffirmed our commitment to streamlining trade between our countries.

Overall, the President and I agree on many things, including, of paramount importance, the direction we want to take our countries in to ensure a clean and prosperous future. We've made tremendous progress on many issues. Unfortunately, I will leave town with my beloved Expos still here in Washington. You can't have everything. [*Laughter*]

I'd like to conclude by extending my deepest thanks to Barack for his leadership on the climate change file to date. I want to assure the American people that they have a real partner in Canada. Canada and the U.S. will stand side by side to confront the pressing needs that face not only our two countries, but the entire planet.

I'm very much looking forward to the remainder of my time here in Washington. So thank you again for your leadership and your friendship. I know that our two countries can achieve great things by working together as allies and as friends, as we have done so many times before.

Merci beaucoup, Barack.

President Obama. All right, we're going to take a few questions. We'll start with Julie Davis [New York Times].

Canada-U.S. Relations/U.S. Supreme Court Nomination Process

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I want to ask you about the Supreme Court. You've already said you're looking for a highly qualified nominee with impeccable credentials. Can you give us a sense of what other factors you're considering in making your final choice? How much of this comes down to a gut feeling for you? And does it affect your decision to know that your nominee is very likely to hang out in the public eye without hearings or a vote for a long time, or maybe ever? And frankly, shouldn't that be driving your decision if you're asking someone to put themselves forward for this position as this point?

For Prime Minister Trudeau, I wanted to ask you—we know you've been following our Presidential campaign here in the U.S. As the President alluded to, you've even made a joke about welcoming Americans who might be frightened of a Donald Trump Presidency to your country. What do you think the stakes are for you and for the relationship between

Canada and the United States if Donald Trump or Ted Cruz were to win the Presidency and to succeed President Obama? You obviously see eye-to-eye with him on a lot of issues. What do you think—how would it affect the relationship if one of them were to succeed President Obama? Thank you.

President Obama. Even though it wasn't directed to me, let me just—[*laughter*]—I do want to point out I am absolutely certain that, in 2012, when there was the possibility that I might be reelected, there were folks who were threatening to go to Canada as well. And one of the great things about a relationship like Canada's and the United States is, it transcends party and it's bipartisan in terms of the interests that we share.

With respect to the Supreme Court, I've told you, Julie, what I'm looking for. I want somebody who is an outstanding jurist, who has impeccable legal credentials, who, by historical standards, would not even be questioned as qualified for the Court.

Obviously, it's somebody who I want to make sure follows the Constitution; cares about things like stare decisis and precedent; understands the necessary humility of a judge at any level in looking at statute, looking at what the elected branches are doing; is not viewing themselves as making law or, in some ways, standing above elected representatives, but also recognizes the critical role that that branch plays in protecting minorities, to ensuring that the political system doesn't skew in ways that systematically leave people out; that are mindful of the traditions that are embedded in our cherished documents like the Bill of Rights.

So in terms of who I select, I'm going to do my job. And then my expectation is going to be that the Senate do its job as outlined in the Constitution. I've said this before: I find it ironic that people who are constantly citing the Constitution would suddenly read into the Constitution requirements, norms, procedures that are nowhere to be found there. That's precisely the kinds of interpretive approach that they have vehemently rejected and that they accused liberals of engaging in all the time. Well, you can't abandon your principles—if in fact these are your principles—simply for the sake of political expedience.

So we'll see how they operate once a nomination has been made. I'm confident that whoever I select, among fairminded people, will be viewed as an eminently qualified person. And it will then be up to Senate Republicans to decide whether they want to follow the Constitution and abide by the rules of fair play that ultimately undergird our democracy and that ensure that the Supreme Court does not just become one more extension of our polarized politics.

If and when it—that happens, our system is not going to work. It's not that the Supreme Court or any of our courts can be hermetically sealed from the rest of our society. These are human beings. They read the newspapers; they've got opinions; they've got values. But our goal is to have them be objective and be able to execute their duties in a way that gives everybody—both the winning party and the losing party in any given case—a sense that they were treated fairly. That depends on a process of selecting and confirming judges that is perceived as fair. And my hope is, is that cooler heads will prevail and people will reflect on what's at stake here once a nomination is made.

Prime Minister Trudeau. One of the things that is abundantly clear whenever a President and Prime Minister sit down to engage on important issues of relevance to our peoples is that the relationship, the friendship between our two countries goes far beyond any two individuals or any ideologies.

I have tremendous confidence in the American people, and look forward to working with whomever they choose to send to this White House later this year.

Alex [Alexander Panetta, Canadian Press].

Canada-U.S. Relations

Q. Good morning. This meeting is happening at a unique point in the Canada-U.S. relationship. President Obama, you have very little time left here. Prime Minister Trudeau, you have several years to think about and work on

Canada's most important relationship. So I'd like to ask you a longer term question, maybe to lay down some markers about big ideas, big things that you think the two countries could achieve in the coming years, beyond the next few months, and whether those things might include something like a common market that would allow goods and services and workers to flow more freely across our border.

And on a more personal note, you've had a chance to observe each other's election campaigns, and now you've had a chance to work together a little bit. I'd like to ask you for your impressions—to ask about your impression of President Obama and his potential legacy and about Prime Minister Trudeau's potential. And if you could answer that in French, bonus points to either of you—[*laughter*]—but we'd be especially keen to hear Prime Minister Trudeau do so. Thank you.

Prime Minister Trudeau. Thank you, Alex. First of all, we very much did engage on big issues throughout our conversations and throughout our hard work this morning and over the months leading up to this meeting today, issues that are of import not just to all of our citizens, but to the entire world.

Whether it's how we ensure that there is no contradiction between a strong economy and a protected environment; understand how we need to work together as individual countries, but indeed, as a planet to address the challenges of climate change; how we continue to seek to ensure security for our citizens here at home, but also create stability and opportunity and health security for people around the world facing pandemics and violence and issues—these are big issues that Canada and the U.S. have always been engaged on in various ways over the past decades and centuries and, indeed, will continue to.

One of the things that we highlight is the fact that we have different scales, different perspectives on similar issues and on shared values is actually a benefit in that we can complement each other in our engagement with the world and our approach to important issues.

So I look forward to many, many, many more years—it will certainly outlive the both of us—of a tremendous and responsible and effective friendship and collaboration between our two countries.

[*Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Trudeau. The topic of our discussions this morning has been what is at stake: climate change, security in the world, our commitments towards the most vulnerable populations. Canada and the United States are the lucky countries in many ways; they will always have a lot to do in order to be together in the world. And this is what we are going to keep on doing in the years and the decades to come, and we hope in the centuries to come.

About President Obama, I've learned a lot from him. He is somebody who is a deep thinker. He is somebody with a big heart, but also a big brain. And for me to be able to count on him as a friend who has lived through many of the things that I'm about to encounter on the political stage, on the international stage, it's a great comfort to me. And it is always great to have people that you can trust, people that you can count on personally, especially when you are facing very big challenges such as what we are doing right now in the United States and Canada.

[*Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in English as follows.*]

Prime Minister Trudeau. Always pleased to hear from President Obama how he has engaged with difficult issues of the past, because he is a man of both tremendous heart and tremendous intellect. And being able to draw on his experience and his wisdom as I face the very real challenges that our countries and, indeed, our world will be facing in the coming years is something I appreciate deeply about my friend, Barack.

President Obama. Well—Alex, was it?

Prime Minister Trudeau. Alex.

President Obama. Let me just note, first of all, that the tenor of your question seems to imply that I'm old and creaky. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Trudeau. Not the tenor of my answer, I hope. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. No, you managed it well. [*Laughter*] But don't think I didn't catch that. It is true—I think I've said before—that in my congratulatory call, I indicated to him that if, in fact, you plan to keep your dark hair, then you have to start dyeing it early. [*Laughter*] You hit a certain point, and it's too late; you'll be caught.

But look, I think Justin and his delegation—because one of the things we learn very rapidly in these jobs is, is that this is a team effort and not a solo act—they're bringing the right values, enormous energy, enormous passion and commitment to their work, and perhaps most importantly, it's clear that they are keenly interested in engaging Canadian citizens in the process of solving problems.

And I think that's how democracies are supposed to work. And their instincts are sound. And that's reflected in the positive response of—to the work that they've done so far, and I think that will carry them very far. And Justin's talent and concern for the Canadian people and his appreciation of the vital role that Canada can play in the larger world is self-apparent. He is, I think, going to do a great job. And we're looking forward to partnering with him, and we're glad to have him and his team as a partner.

And with respect to big ideas, look, to some degree, you don't fix what's not broken. And the relationship is extraordinary and doesn't, I don't think, need some set of revolutionary concepts. What it does require is not taking the relationship for granted. It does require steady effort. And perhaps most importantly, it requires, because we have so much in common, that we recognize on the big, looming issues on the horizon, it is vital for us to work together because the more aligned we are, the more we can shape the international agenda to meet these challenges.

Climate change is such an example. This is going to be a big problem for everybody. There are countries that are going to be hit worse by it; in some ways, Canada and the United States, as wealthier countries, can probably adapt and manage better. On the other hand, we're also those responsible for a lot of the carbon pollution that is causing climate change. If we don't agree, if we're not aggressive, if we're not farsighted, if we don't pool our resources around the research and development and clean energy agenda that's required to solve this problem, then other countries won't step up, and it won't get solved. That's a big idea. That's a really important effort.

With respect to the economy, one of the things that Canada and the United States share is a commitment to a free market. I believe, and I know Justin does as well, that a market-based economy not only has proven to be the greatest engine for prosperity the world has ever known, but also underwrites our individual freedoms in many ways. And we value our business sector, and we value entrepreneurship. But what we're seeing across the developed world—and this will have manifestations in the developing world—is the need for more inclusion in growth, making sure that it's broad based, making sure that people are not left behind in a globalized economy. And that's an area—that's a big idea for the United States and Canada to work together on, along with our other partners.

If we don't get this right, if we do not make sure that the average Canadian or the average American has confidence that the fruits of their labor, their—the opportunities for their children are going to continue to expand over time, if they see societies in which a very few are doing better and better and the middle class and working people are falling further and further behind, that destabilizes the economy, it makes it less efficient, it makes it less rapid in its growth. But it also starts destabilizing our politics in—and our democracies.

And so working together to find effective ways, not to close off borders, not to pretend that somehow we can shut off trade, not to forget that we are, ourselves, a nation—nations of immigrants and that diversity is our strength, but rather to say, yes, the world is big, and we

are going to help shape it, and we're going to value our openness and our diversity, and the fact that we are leaders in a global supply chain, but we're going to do so in ways that make sure everybody benefits—that's important work that we're going to have to do together. And I know Justin shares that commitment just as I do.

Margaret Brennan [CBS News].

U.S. Supreme Court Nomination Process/2016 Presidential Election/Republican Party/Trade

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Some of your critics has—have pointed to the incredibly polarized political climate as—under your administration as contributing to the rise of someone as provocative as Donald Trump. Do you feel responsibility for that, or even some of the protectionist rhetoric from some Democratic candidates? Do you have a timeline for when you might make a Presidential endorsement? And to follow on my colleague's question here, do you feel political heat is constraining your pool of viable Supreme Court nominees? Thank you.

President Obama. It's a threefer. I think it's important for me to nominate a Supreme Court nominee quickly because I think it's important for the Supreme Court to have its full complement of Justices. I don't feel constrained in terms of the pool to draw from or that I'm having to take shortcuts in terms of the selection and vetting process.

With respect to your first question, I've actually heard this argument a number of times. I have been blamed by Republicans for a lot of things, but being blamed for their primaries and who they're selecting for their party is novel. [*Laughter*]

Look, I've said—I said it at the State of the Union—that one of my regrets is the degree to which polarization and the nasty tone of our politics has accelerated rather than waned over the course of the last 7½ years. And I do all kinds of soul searching in terms of are there things I can do better to make sure that we're unifying the country. But I also have to say, Margaret, that, objectively, it's fair to say that the Republican political elites and many of the information outlets—social media, news outlets, talk radio, television stations—have been feeding the Republican base for the last 7 years a notion that everything I do is to be opposed; that cooperation or compromise somehow is a betrayal; that maximalist, absolutist positions on issues are politically advantageous; that there is a "them" out there and an "us," and "them" are the folks who are causing whatever problems you're experiencing.

And the tone of that politics, which I certainly have not contributed to—I have not—I don't think that I was the one to prompt questions about my birth certificate, for example. I don't remember saying, hey, why don't you ask me about that? [*Laughter*] Or why don't you question whether I'm American or whether I'm loyal or whether I have America's best interests at heart? Those aren't things that were prompted by any actions of mine.

And so what you're seeing within the Republican Party is, to some degree, all those efforts over a course of time creating an environment where somebody like a Donald Trump can thrive. He's just doing more of what has been done for the last 7½ years.

And in fact, in terms of his positions on a whole range of issues, they're not very different from any of the other candidates. I mean, it's not as if there's a massive difference between Mr. Trump's position on immigration and Mr. Cruz's position on immigration. Mr. Trump might just be more provocative in terms of how he says it, but the actual positions aren't that different. For that matter, they're not that different from Mr. Rubio's positions on immigration, despite the fact that both Mr. Cruz and Mr. Rubio, their own families are the products of immigration and the openness of our society.

So I am more than happy to own the responsibility as President, as the only office holder who was elected by all the American people, to continue to make efforts to bridge divides and help us find common ground. As I've said before, I think that common ground exists all across the country. You see it every day in how people work together and live together and play together and raise their kids together. But

what I'm not going to do is to validate some notion that the Republican crackup that's been taking place is a consequence of actions that I'm—I've taken.

And what's interesting—I'll just say one last thing about this—there are thoughtful conservatives who are troubled by this, who are troubled by the direction of their party. I think it is very important for them to reflect on what it is about the politics they've engaged in that allows the circus we've been seeing to transpire and to do some introspection.

Because, ultimately, I want an effective Republican Party. I think this country has to have responsible parties that can govern and that are prepared to lead and govern whether they're in the minority or in the majority, whether they occupy the White House or they do not. And I've often said I want a serious, effective Republican Party, in part to challenge some of the blind spots and dogmas in the Democratic Party. I think that's useful.

You mentioned trade, for example. I believe that there have been bad trade deals on occasion in the past that oftentimes, they have served the interests of global corporations, but not necessarily served the interests of workers. But I'm absolutely persuaded that we cannot put up walls around a global economy and that to sell a bill of goods to the American people and workers that if you just shut down trade somehow, your problems would go away prevents us from actually solving some of these big problems about inequality and the decline of our manufacturing base and so on.

And that's an area where some traditional conservatives and economists have had some important insights. But they can't be presented effectively if it's combined with no interest in helping workers and busting up unions and providing tax breaks to the wealthy rather than providing help to folks who are working hard and trying to pay the bills. And certainly, it's not going to be heard if it's coupled with vehement, anti-immigrant sentiment that betrays our values.

So, okay?

Q. And an endorsement, sir?

President Obama. I think that the Democratic voters are doing just fine working this out. I think it's useful that we've had a vigorous debate among two good people who care deeply about our country and who have fought hard on behalf of working people in this country for a long time. I think it's been a good conversation. And my most important role will be to make sure that after primaries is done, I'm bringing everybody together so that we focus on winning the general election.

Prime Minister Trudeau. Emmanuelle [Emmanuelle Latraverse, Radio-Canada].

Canada-U.S. Trade Relations/Canada-U.S. Relations/President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Mr. President, I'll be asking the Prime Minister my question in French, but I will repeat for you in English afterwards.

[*The reporter spoke in French, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. Mr. Trudeau, you have not talked about softwood lumber, and it's a major problem for the bilateral relations. Have you thought about solutions to avoid that the conflict reopens in October? And you signed several agreements—trade, environment—but what can you do so that the implementations survive the November election and that all of this has to be restarted a year from now?

[*The reporter spoke in English as follows.*]

Q. ——of softwood lumber, which is looming over the bilateral relation? And has any avenue been explored into avoiding a new conflict in October? And to what extent is the fear of losing seats for the Democrats due to this issue kind of hampering progress on this? And that being said, you and Prime Minister Trudeau have signed a number of agreements on a number of issues. What can be done for this progress not to be lost with the arrival of a new administration and have everything have to be started all over again? Thank you.

[*Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Trudeau. Thank you, Emmanuelle. For months and months, we have been preparing that meeting. And this morning we worked very hard, and we made a lot of progress, and we have showed what is at stake. A lot is at stake. And we hope that this is going to be solved shortly to help enormously not only Canadian workers and Canadian economy, but also the economy of both our countries.

And among these discussions, we—of course, we raised the question of softwood lumber. We keep on working on that. And I'm totally confident that we are on the right track towards a solution in the next weeks and months to come.

Now, in terms of the decisions that we have taken and the work we have done today, I'm extremely confident that what we have managed to achieve, the agreements that we have taken and the solutions that we have found for the problems that we face together, I'm confident that all this is going to become a reality. Because at every stage, not only are we talking about what is good for one side or the other side, but we're talking about what is good for both countries. Our economies are so interwoven, our populations are so interconnected, that we are going to have agreement, for instance, that will facilitate crossing of borders while increasing security of our citizens. This is good for both sides. And it is where we worked so hard together, with a lot of progress and a lot of success today.

[*Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in English as follows.*]

Prime Minister Trudeau. ——on many different issues over the course of an extremely productive meeting this morning, issues that have been worked on intensely by our respective friends, colleagues and delegations over the past weeks and months. And certainly, softwood lumber came up. And I'm confident that we are on a track towards resolving this irritant in the coming weeks and months.

But in general, the issues that we made tremendous progress on I'm extremely confident will move forward in a rapid and appropriate fashion because we found such broad agreement on issues that aren't just good for one of our two countries, but indeed both of our countries: for Canadians and Americans, for their jobs, for our kids and their futures, for workers, businesses, as we tackle challenges on the economy, challenges on the environment, and understand that working together in constructive, productive ways is exactly what this relationship and, indeed, this friendship is all about.

So I'm feeling extremely good about the hard work that was done this morning, and indeed, about the work remaining to do over the coming weeks and months on the issues we brought forward today.

President Obama. This issue of softwood lumber will get resolved in some fashion. Our teams are already making progress on it. It's been a longstanding bilateral irritant, but hardly defines the nature of the U.S.-Canadian relationship. And we have some very smart people, and they'll find a way to resolve it, undoubtedly, to the dissatisfaction of all parties concerned, because that's the nature of these kinds of things, right? Each side will want 100 percent, and we'll find a way for each side to get 60 percent or so of what they need, and people will complain and grumble, but it will be fine. [*Laughter*]

And in terms of continuity, one thing I will say, this is an area where I'll play the elder statesman and—as Alex described me. [*Laughter*] And as somebody who came in after an administration that, politically, obviously saw things very differently than I did, what you discover is that for all the differences you may have in your political parties, when you're actually in charge, then you have to be practical, and you do what is needed to be done and what's in front of you. And one of the things that is important for the United States or for Canada or for any leading power in the world, is to live up to its commitments and to provide continuing momentum on efforts, even if they didn't start under your administration.

So there were a whole host of initiatives that began under the Bush administration—some that I was very enthusiastic about, like PEPFAR, that has saved millions of lives and prevented HIV/AIDS or provided vital drugs to those already infected with HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world, something that President Bush deserves enormous credit for. We continued that.

But there are also some areas where, when I was outside the Government, I questioned how they were approaching it. I might have tweaked it. To the extent that it involved foreign policy, I might say to my foreign policy partners, look, we have a problem of doing it this way, but here is a suggestion for how we can do the same thing or meet your interests in a slightly different way.

But you're always concerned about making sure that the credibility of the United States is sustained, or the credibility of Canada is sustained, which is why when there's turnover in governments, the work that's been done continues. And particularly when you have a close friendship and relationship with a partner like Canada, it's not as if the work we're doing on the Arctic or on entry and exit visas vanishes when the next President comes in. Of course, I intend to make sure that the next President who comes in agrees with me on everything. [*Laughter*] But just in case that doesn't happen, the U.S.-Canadian relationship will be fine.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:11 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Sophie Grégoire-Trudeau, wife of Prime Minister Trudeau; Donald J. Trump, chairman and chief executive officer, Trump Organization, Sen. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz, and Sen. Marco A. Rubio, in their capacity as Republican Presidential candidates; and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sen. Bernard Sanders, in their capacity as Democratic Presidential candidates. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Joint Statement by President Obama and Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada on Climate, Energy, and Arctic Leadership
March 10, 2016

President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau share a common vision of a prosperous and sustainable North American economy, and the opportunities afforded by advancing clean growth. They emphasize and embrace the special relationship between the two countries and their history of close collaboration on energy development, environmental protection, and Arctic leadership. The two leaders regard the Paris Agreement as a turning point in global efforts to combat climate change and anchor economic growth in clean development. They resolve that the United States and Canada must and will play a leadership role internationally in the low carbon global economy over the coming decades, including through science-based steps to protect the Arctic and its peoples. Canada and the U.S. will continue to respect and promote the rights of Indigenous peoples in all climate change decision making. Furthermore, the leaders emphasize the importance of the U.S. and Canada continuing to cooperate closely with Mexico on climate and energy action and commit to strengthen a comprehensive and enduring North American climate and energy partnership.

Implementing the Paris Agreement

Canada and the U.S. will work together to implement the historic Paris Agreement, and commit to join and sign the Agreement as soon as feasible. As we implement our respective Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), the leaders also commit to, in 2016, completing mid-century, long-term low

greenhouse gas emission development strategies pursuant to the Paris Agreement and encouraging this approach with members of the G–20.

Canada and the U.S. will work with developing country partners to assist in implementation of their INDCs and strengthening their adaptation efforts. Both countries will strive to enhance the effectiveness of adaptation assistance by coordinating support for adaptation planning and action through the National Adaptation Plans Global Network. The leaders also commit to working closely to promote the full implementation of the enhanced transparency framework with common modalities, procedures and guidelines under the Paris Agreement. They affirm their support for the new Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency, designed to enhance institutional and technical capacity to meet transparency requirements.

Recognizing the role that carbon markets can play in helping countries achieve their climate targets while also driving low-carbon innovation, both countries commit to work together to support robust implementation of the carbon markets–related provisions of the Paris Agreement. The federal governments, together and in close communication with states, provinces and territories, will explore options for ensuring the environmental integrity of transferred units, in particular to inform strong INDC accounting and efforts to avoid "double-counting" of emission reductions. They will also encourage sub-national governments to share lessons learned about the design of effective carbon pricing systems and supportive policies and measures. The countries will expand their collaboration in this area over time.

Coordinated domestic climate action

Building on a history of working together to reduce air emissions, Canada and the U.S., commit to take action to reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas sector, the world's largest industrial methane source, in support of achieving our respective international climate change commitments. To set us on an ambitious and achievable path, the leaders commit to reduce methane emissions by 40–45 percent below 2012 levels by 2025 from the oil and gas sector, and explore new opportunities for additional methane reductions. The leaders also invite other countries to join the target or develop their own methane reduction goal. To achieve this target, both countries commit to:

- *Regulate existing sources of methane emissions in the oil and gas sector:*
    - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will begin developing regulations for methane emissions from existing oil and gas sources immediately and will move as expeditiously as possible to complete this process. Next month, EPA will start a formal process to require companies operating existing methane emissions sources to provide information to assist in development of comprehensive standards to decrease methane emissions.
    - Environment and Climate Change Canada will also regulate methane emissions from new and existing oil and gas sources. Environment and Climate Change Canada will move, as expeditiously as possible, to put in place national regulations in collaboration with provinces/territories, Indigenous Peoples and stakeholders. Environment and Climate Change Canada intends to publish an initial phase of proposed regulations by early 2017.
- *Work collaboratively on federal measures to reduce methane emissions:* Building on the U.S.-Canada Air Quality Agreement, both countries will work collaboratively on programs, policies, and strategies, and share experiences on reducing oil and gas methane emissions as they implement their respective federal regulations, beginning this year.
- *Improve data collection, transparency, and R&D and share knowledge of cost-effective methane reduction technologies and practices:* To ensure our actions are based on the best available data and

technology, Canada and the U.S. will work together to improve methane data collection and emissions quantification, and transparency of emissions reporting in North America, and share knowledge of cost-effective methane reduction technologies and practices.

- *Jointly endorse the World Bank's Zero Routine Flaring by 2030 Initiative:* Reflecting their increasing concern about the climate, environment, and energy security impacts of oil and gas flaring, particularly in sensitive regions such as the Arctic, the U.S. and Canada commit to jointly endorse the World Bank's Zero Routine Flaring by 2030 Initiative, and report annually on progress.

Both Canada and the U.S. affirm their commitment to reduce use and emissions of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) using their respective domestic frameworks and will propose new actions in 2016. Canada and the U.S. are both demonstrating leadership by updating their public procurement processes to transition away from high global warming potential HFCs, whenever feasible, through government purchase of more sustainable and greener equipment and products.

Recognizing the excellent collaboration between Canada and the U.S. to establish world-class, aligned regulations and programs to improve the fuel efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas and air pollutant emissions from on-road vehicles, the leaders reaffirm their commitment to continue this strong collaboration towards the finalization and implementation of a second phase of aligned greenhouse gas emission standards for post-2018 model year on-road heavy-duty vehicles. The two countries are currently implementing aligned requirements for greenhouse gas emission standards for cars and light trucks and the leaders commit to continue close collaboration in conducting mid-term evaluations of the applicable standards for the 2022–2025 model years to ensure further acceleration of the improvement of vehicle efficiency and zero emission technologies

Given the integrated nature of many aspects of the U.S. and Canadian economies, alignment of analytical methods for assessing and communicating the impact of direct and indirect GHG emissions of major projects, and of measures to reduce those emissions, can be mutually beneficial. Canada and the U.S. will align approaches, reflecting the best available science for accounting for the broad costs to society of the GHG emissions that will be avoided by mitigation measures, including using similar values for the social cost of carbon and other GHGs for assessing the benefits of regulatory measures.

Advancing climate action globally

Beyond the Paris Agreement and areas of coordinated domestic climate action, President Obama and Prime Minister Trudeau underline the important opportunities to make further progress on climate action globally.

The U.S. and Canada affirm their commitment to adopt a Montreal Protocol HFC phasedown amendment in 2016, and upon adoption to provide increased financial support to the Protocol's Multilateral Fund to help developing countries implement a phase-down. The U.S. and Canada will continue to support a range of activities that promote alternatives to high global warming potential HFCs and promote greener technologies, including in those countries facing challenges such as high ambient temperatures.

The leaders express their strong commitment to work together and through the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to reduce emissions from international aviation by fostering technological and operational advancements, implementing the new carbon standard for airplanes, and adopting in 2016 a carbon offset measure that will allow for carbon neutral growth from international civil aviation. They encourage world leaders to join them in supporting adoption of the carbon offset measure at ICAO's fall 2016 Assembly.

The leaders will also work together and with other countries to encourage robust leader-level G–20 commitments to improve the environmental performance of heavy-duty vehicles, in-

cluding through the implementation of stringent domestic regulations on fuel efficiency and/or greenhouse gas emissions, air pollutant emissions and low-sulphur fuels and green freight programs. They will also pursue G–20 commitments to reduce emissions of methane, including through private sector commitments and voluntary mechanisms such as the Oil and Gas Methane Partnership.

Recognizing the particular impact of climate change on countries already dealing with conflict and fragility, the leaders commit to addressing the intersection of climate change and security as an issue for foreign, defense, and development policies. Through the G–7 working group on climate and security and elsewhere, both sides will work together to support sound analysis, practical recommendations, and meaningful cooperation to address climate-fragility risks.

Cooperation on clean energy

Building on the strong and ongoing efforts by energy ministers under institutional arrangements such as the Canada-U.S. bilateral framework on energy cooperation, the North American Energy Ministers' recent understanding on Climate Change and Energy Cooperation, Mission Innovation, the Clean Energy Ministerial, and the Regulatory Cooperation Council, the leaders reaffirm their commitment to working together to strengthen North American energy security, phase out fossil fuel subsidies, accelerate clean energy development to address climate change and to foster sustainable energy development and economic growth. Specifically, the leaders pledge to enhance efforts in the following areas:

- *Facilitate the integration of renewables on our interconnected grids:* jointly study, identify, and implement options for broad integration, including how to bring more wind, solar, hydro and other renewable energy online.
- *Align energy efficiency standards and expand shared labeling programs:* better align and further improve appliance and equipment efficiency standards by 2020 and expand cooperation on the ENERGY STAR program.
- *Accelerate clean energy and clean technology innovation:* leverage participation in Mission Innovation, and strengthen collaboration on clean energy research and development for: reducing methane emissions; improving electrical grids; accelerating electric vehicle development and integration; unconventional oil and gas; carbon capture, use and storage; and, new cutting-edge technologies.
- *Advance global efforts to accelerate clean energy:* partner to help to lead important multi-lateral efforts such as Mission Innovation and the Clean Energy Ministerial and its initiatives.
- *Develop a joint U.S.-Canadian strategy for strengthening the security and resilience of the North American electricity grid:* work together to strengthen the security and resilience of the electric grid, including against the growing threat from cyber-attacks and climate change impacts.

A shared Arctic leadership model

Beyond deepening cooperation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—which will have an outsized impact on the long-term health of the global Arctic—President Obama and Prime Minister Trudeau are announcing a new partnership to embrace the opportunities and to confront the challenges in the changing Arctic, with Indigenous and Northern partnerships, and responsible, science-based leadership. Arctic communities rest on the territories of Indigenous peoples, who possess a wealth of knowledge, distinct ways of life, and a richness of cultural diversity. It is home to natural marine, land and air migrations that know no borders. It is also the frontline of climate change. Acting for a shared future, we call on all Arctic nations and those with Arctic interests to embrace a new future for Arctic leadership, with our four objectives:

Conserving Arctic biodiversity through science-based decision making. Canada and the U.S. re-affirm our national goals of protecting at least 17% of land areas and 10% of marine areas by 2020. We will take concrete steps to achieve and substantially surpass these national goals in the coming years. Specifically, we will work directly with Indigenous partners, state, territorial and provincial governments to establish this year a new, ambitious conservation goal for the Arctic based on the best available climate science and knowledge, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. We will also play a leadership role in engaging all Arctic nations to develop a pan-Arctic marine protection area network.

Incorporating Indigenous science and traditional knowledge into decision-making. Canada and the U.S. are committed to collaborating with Indigenous and Arctic governments, leaders, and communities to more broadly and respectfully include Indigenous science and traditional knowledge into decision making, including in environmental assessments, resource management, and advancing our understanding of climate change and how best to manage its effects.

Building a sustainable Arctic economy. We confirm that for commercial activities in the Arctic—including shipping, fishing, and oil and gas exploration and development—we will set a world-class standard by basing development decisions and operations on scientific evidence. Further, commercial activities will occur only when the highest safety and environmental standards are met, including national and global climate and environmental goals, and Indigenous rights and agreements. Canada and the U.S. will work to develop this year a shared and science-based standard for considering the life-cycle impacts of commercial activities in the Arctic.

- *Low impact shipping corridors:* We will work together to establish consistent policies for ships operating in the region, taking into account important ecological and cultural areas, vessel traffic patterns, Indigenous and Northern Arctic input, and increased cooperation of our Coast Guards. The two countries will also work together to share assessments of navigation data quality and capacities for supporting safe and low-impact shipping in the Beaufort Sea. In addition, we will determine with Arctic partners how best to address the risks posed by heavy fuel oil use and black carbon emissions from Arctic shipping.
- *Abundant Arctic fish:* The leaders call for a binding international agreement to prevent the opening of unregulated fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean to preserve living marine resources and promote scientific research in the region. Canada offers to host the next round of negotiations, to continue momentum and build on a precautionary, science-based principle to commercial fishing that both countries have put in place in their Arctic waters.
- *Science-based approach to oil and gas:* If oil and gas development and exploration proceeds, activities must align with science-based standards between the two nations that ensure appropriate preparation for operating in Arctic conditions, including robust and effective well control and emergency response measures.

Supporting strong Arctic communities. We commit to defining new approaches and exchanging best practices to strengthen the resilience of Arctic communities and continuing to support the well-being of Arctic residents, in particular respecting the rights and territory of Indigenous peoples. All Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic are vital to strengthening and supporting U.S. and Canadian sovereignty claims. We commit to working in partnership to implement land claims agreements to realize the social, cultural and economic potential of all Indigenous and Northern communities. With partners, we will develop and share a plan and timeline for deploying innovative renewable energy and efficiency alternatives to diesel and advance community climate change adaptation. We will do this through closer coordination among Indigenous, state, provincial, and

territorial governments and the development of innovative options for housing and infrastructure. We also commit to greater action to address the serious challenges of mental wellness, education, Indigenous language, and skill development, particularly among Indigenous youth.

In moving forward, we welcome the upcoming White House Arctic Science Ministerial this fall, which will bring together Science Ministers from nations with Arctic interests, and the twentieth anniversary of the Ottawa Declaration, which established the Arctic Council in 1996. Canada and the U.S. commit to a regular bilateral dialogue to ensure progress towards the realization of these objectives, to continuing their strong cooperation on scientific work and research, and to advancing our shared Arctic leadership model through the Arctic Council.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernest J. Moniz; and Minister of Natural Resources James G. Carr of Canada. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada

March 10, 2016

President Obama. Good evening, everybody. *Bonsoir*. On behalf of Michelle and myself, welcome to the White House as we host Prime Minister Trudeau, Mrs. Grégoire-Trudeau, and the Canadian delegation for the first official visit and state dinner with Canada in nearly 20 years. Now, we intend to have fun tonight. But not too much. [*Laughter*] If things get out of hand, remember that the Prime Minister used to work as a bouncer. [*Laughter*] This is true. [*Laughter*]

So tonight history comes full circle. Forty-four years ago, President Nixon made a visit to Ottawa. And he was hosted by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. [*Applause*] That deserves a toast. At a private dinner, there was a toast. "Tonight we'll dispense with the formalities," President Nixon said. "I'd like to propose a toast to the future Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Pierre Trudeau." [*Laughter*] He was 4 months at the time. [*Laughter*]

All these years later, the prediction has come to pass. Mr. Prime Minister, after today, I think it's fair to say that, here in America, you may well be the most popular Canadian named Justin. [*Laughter*] It's possible.

I said this morning that Americans and Canadians are family. And tonight I want to recognize two people who mean so much to me and Michelle and our family. First of all, my wonderful brother-in-law, originally from Burlington, Ontario, Konrad Ng. Hey, Konrad! This is actually an interesting story, though, that I was not aware of: Konrad indicated to me when we saw each other this afternoon that part of the reason his family was able to immigrate to Canada was because of policies adopted by Justin's father. And so had that not happened, he might not have met my sister, in which case, my lovely nieces might not have been born. [*Laughter*] So this is yet one more debt that we owe the people of Canada [*Laughter*] In addition, a true friend and a member of my team who has been with me every step of the way—he is from Toronto and Victoria—and also a frequent golf partner: Marvin Nicholson. So as you can see, they've infiltrated all of our ranks. [*Laughter*]

Before I ever became President, when we celebrated my sister and Konrad's marriage, Michelle and I took our daughters to Canada. And we went to Burlington and—this is always tough—Mississauga. [*Laughter*] And then we went to Toronto and Niagara Falls. [*Laughter*] Mississauga. I can do that. [*Laughter*] And everywhere we went, the Canadian people made us feel right at home.

And tonight we want our Canadian friends to feel at home. So this is not a dinner, it's supper. [*Laughter*] We thought of serving up

some poutine. [*Laughter*] I was going to bring a two-four. [*Laughter*] And then we'd finish off the night with a double-double. [*Laughter*] But I had to draw the line at getting milk out of a bag. [*Laughter*] This we Americans do not understand. [*Laughter*] We do, however, have a little Canadian whiskey. That we do understand. [*Laughter*]

This visit has been a celebration of the values that we share. We, as a peoples, are committed to the principles of equality and opportunity, the idea that if you work hard and play by the rules, you can make it if you try, no matter what the circumstances of your birth, in both of our countries.

And we see this in our current Presidential campaign. After all, where else could a boy born in Calgary grow up to run for President of the United States? [*Laughter*] Where else would we see a community like Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, welcoming Americans if the election does not go their way? [*Laughter*] And to the great credit of their people, Canadians from British Columbia to New Brunswick have, so far, rejected the idea of building a wall to keep out your southern neighbors. [*Laughter*] We appreciate that. [*Laughter*] We can be unruly, I know.

But, on a serious note, this visit reminds us of what we love about Canada. It's the solidarity shown by so many Canadians after 9/11 when they welcomed stranded American travelers into their homes. It's the courage of your servicemembers, standing with us in Afghanistan and now in Iraq. It's the compassion of the Canadian people welcoming refugees, and the Prime Minister himself, who told those refugees, "You're safe at home now."

Justin, we also see Canada's spirit in your mother's brave advocacy for mental health care, and I want to give a special welcome to Margaret Trudeau tonight. And we see Canada's spirit in Sophie, a champion of women and girls, because our daughters deserve the same opportunities that anybody's sons do.

And this spirit reminds us of why we're all here, why we serve. Justin, Sophie, your children are still young. They are adorable, and they still let you hug them. [*Laughter*] When we first spoke on the phone after your election, we talked not only as President and Prime Minister, but also as fathers. When I was first elected to this office, Malia was 10 and Sasha was just 7. And they grow up too fast. This fall, Malia heads off to college. And I'm starting to choke up. [*Laughter*] So I'm going to wind this—it was in my remarks—[*laughter*]—and I didn't—I can't do it. It's hard. [*Laughter*]

But there is a point to this, though, and that is that we're not here for power. We're not here for fame or fortune. We're here for our kids. We're here for everybody's kids: to give our sons and our daughters a better world; to pass to them a world that's a little safer and a little more equal and a little more just, a little more prosperous, so that a young person growing up in Chicago or Montreal or on the other side of the world has every opportunity to make of their life what they will, no matter who they are or what they look like or how they pray or who they love.

Justin, I believe there are no better words to guide us in this work than those you once used to describe what your father taught you and your siblings: to believe in yourself; to stand up for ourselves; to know ourselves and to accept responsibility for ourselves; to show a genuine and deep respect for each other and for every human being.

And so I would like to propose a toast: to the great alliance between the United States and Canada; to our friends, Justin and Sophie; to the friendship between Americans and Canadians and the spirit that binds us together, a genuine and deep and abiding respect for each and every human being. Cheers.

[*At this point, President Obama offered a toast.*]

Prime Minister Trudeau. Dear friends, Mr. President, Barack, Michelle, all of you gathered here, it is an extraordinary honor for me to be here with you tonight. Thank you so much for the warm welcome you've extended to Canada and to the Canadian delegation and to Sophie and me, personally.

It's incredibly touching to be able to be here not just as a couple, Sophie and I, but to have

been able to bring our families down as well. Sophie's mom and dad, Estelle and Jean—get a load of Estelle, I'm looking forward to the future with Sophie. [*Laughter*] And of course, my own mother Margaret, whose last state dinner here was in 1977. So it's wonderful to have you here.

It's also touching to meet Malia and Sasha, who are here at their first State Dinner. And quite frankly, the memories for me of being a kid and not being old enough to attend these kinds of events with my father almost makes me wish I had gone through my teenage years as a child of a world leader, but not quite. [*Laughter*] I admire you very much, both of you, for your extraordinary strength and your grace, through what is a remarkable childhood and young adulthood that will give you extraordinary strength and wisdom beyond your years for the rest of your life. The one thing that you have received from your extraordinary parents is the tools to be able to handle the challenges and the opportunities in front of you. So thank you very much for joining us tonight.

In thinking about what I wanted to say this evening, I came across a quote from President Truman, who shared these words with the Canadian Parliament nearly 70 years ago. He said that Canada's relationship with the United States did not develop spontaneously. It did not come about merely through the happy circumstance of geography, but was "compounded of one part proximity and nine parts good will and common sense."

It is that enduring good will and common sense that I believe defines our relationship to this day. It's what makes our constructive partnership possible. It's what allows us to respectfully disagree and remain friends and allies on the few occasions we do. For example, I would argue that it's better to be the leader of a country that consistently wins Olympic gold medals in hockey. [*Laughter*] President Obama would likely disagree. And yet you still invited us over for dinner. [*Laughter*] Because that's what friends do. [*Laughter*]

Because, now that I think of it, we're actually closer than friends. We're more like siblings, really. We have shared parentage, though we took different paths in our later years. We became the stay-at-home type—[*laughter*]—and you grew to be a little more rebellious. [*Laughter*] But I think the reason that good will and common sense comes so easily is because we are, Canadians and Americans alike, guided by the same core values. Values like cooperation and respect. Cooperation because it keeps us safe and prosperous. And respect because it's the surest path to both safeguarding the world we share and honoring the diverse people with whom we share it.

When it comes to security, for example, we agree that our countries are stronger and the world is safer when we work together. For more than half a century, we've joined forces to protect our continent. And we've been the closest of allies overseas for even longer, fighting together on the beaches of France, standing shoulder to shoulder with our European partners in NATO, and now confronting violent extremism in the Middle East.

In every instance, we realize that our concerns were better addressed together than alone, and together, we have realized the longest, most peaceful, and most mutually beneficial relationship of any two countries since the birth of the nation-state. It's a relationship that doesn't just serve its own interests, it serves the entire world. Canadians and Americans also value economic interdependence, because we know that it brings greater prosperity for all of us.

Over $2.4 billion worth of goods and services cross the border every day, evidence of one of the largest and most mutually beneficial trading relationships in the world. And one of your—our most popular exports to the United States, and I need you to stop teasing him, has been another Justin. [*Laughter*] Now—no, no, that kid has had a great year. [*Laughter*] And of course, leave it to a Canadian to reach international fame with a song called "Sorry." [*Laughter*]

Together, Canada and the U.S. negotiated trade agreements that have expanded opportunities for our businesses, created millions of good, well-paying jobs for our workers, and made products more affordable for more Canadian and American families. We must never

take that partnership for granted, and I can promise you that my government never will.

But nor should we forget that our responsibilities expend—extend beyond our own borders and across generations, which means getting rid of that outdated notion that a healthy environment and a strong economy stand in opposition to one another. And it means that when we come to issues like climate change, we need to acknowledge that we are all in this together. Our children and grandchildren will judge us not by the words we said, but by the actions we took or failed to take.

If we truly wish to leave them a better world than the one we inherited from our own parents—and I know, Mr. President, that you and the First Lady want this as strongly as Sophie and I do—we cannot deny the science. We cannot pretend that climate change is still up for debate.

[*Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in French, and no translation was provided. He then continued in English as follows.*]

Thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership—your global leadership—on the pressing issue of the environment and climate change.

And finally, we believe—Canadians and Americans—in the fundamental truth that diversity can be a source of strength, that we are thriving and prosperous countries not in spite of our differences, but because of them. Canadians know this. It's why communities across the country welcomed more than 25,000 Syrian refugees over the past 4 months, and not as visitors or temporary citizens, but as Canadians. But of course, Americans understand this too. It's why each generation has welcomed newcomers seeking liberty and the promise of a better life. It's what has made America great over the past decades.

We know that if we seek to be even greater, we must do greater things: be more compassionate, be more accepting, be more open to those who dress differently or eat different foods or speak different languages. Our identities as Canadians and Americans are enriched by these differences, not threatened by them.

On our own, we make progress. But together, our two countries make history. Duty-bound, loyal, and forever linked, whatever the future holds, we will face it together: neighbors, partners, allies, and friends. This is our experience and our example to the world.

Barack, thank you for all that you have done these past 7 years to preserve this most important relationship. May the special connection between our two countries continue to flourish in the years to come, and may my gray hair come in at a much slower rate than yours has. [*Laughter*]

And with that, on behalf of 36 million Americans, I propose a toast to the President, to the First Lady, and to the people of the United States of America. Cheers.

[*Prime Minister Trudeau offered a toast.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:32 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House Trip Director Marvin D. Nicholson, Jr.; Sen. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate; and Xavier, Ella-Grace, and Hadrien Trudeau, children of Prime Minister Trudeau. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng and nieces Suhaila and Savita Ng. Prime Minister Trudeau referred to his parents-in-law Estelle Blais and Jean Grégoire; and musician Justin D. Bieber.

Remarks During a Question-and-Answer Session at the South by Southwest Interactive Festival in San Antonio, Texas
March 11, 2016

Texas Tribune Editor-in-Chief, Chief Executive Officer, and Cofounder Evan Smith. Hi, Mr. President.

The President. It's good to see you, and hello, Austin! I love Austin, Texas.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I—thank you. It's just good to be back.

Mr. Smith. Nice to have you here. Welcome. Welcome to Austin. Welcome to South by Southwest. Let's make a little news. You stopped at Torchy's on the way in from the airport.

The President. I did.

Mr. Smith. You did.

The President. I did.

Mr. Smith. Would you please share with the world what you told me backstage: your order? Perfectly in keeping with your political views.

The President. I ordered the Democrat. But then, I ordered a Republican and an Independent, because I wanted to give all people a proper hearing.

Mr. Smith. That's right.

The President. I wanted to be fair.

Mr. Smith. Bipartisan in tacos as in life.

The President. That's exactly right.

Government Use of Information Technology

Mr. Smith. That's how it goes. Mr. President, you're very nice to be here with us today. And you came for a purpose. You want to accomplish something. You said as much in your weekly radio address last weekend. I got the opportunity to hear it. Some people in the room have not heard it. For their benefit, and people outside the room, would you say why you're here? Make the pitch in miniature, please.

The President. Well, first of all, I'm here because I like excuses to come to Austin, Texas. [*Laughter*] And that's a good enough reason. And I want to acknowledge your mayor, Steve Adler, who bought tacos with me.

I normally don't do this, but I'm going to embarrass somebody; I want to also acknowledge the Chancellor of the Texas System because he's one of my favorite people and a truly great American——

Mr. Smith. He's somewhere over here.

The President. ——Bill McRaven, who I think is over there.

Mr. Smith. Yes.

The President. He—it's pretty rare where a chancellor of a university system can really mess you up. [*Laughter*] So, in case any of the students are wondering, don't mess with your chancellor. [*Laughter*] Yes, but I knew him as Admiral, and he served America as well as anybody has served it.

Look, the—we are at a moment in history where technology, globalization, our economy is changing so fast. And this gathering, South by Southwest, brings together people are—who are at the cutting edge of those changes. Those changes offer us enormous opportunities, but also are very disruptive and unsettling. They empower individuals to do things that they could have never dreamed of before, but they also empower folks who are very dangerous to spread dangerous messages.

And part of my challenge since I've been President is trying to find ways in which our Government can be a part of the positive change that's taking place and can help convene and catalyze folks in the private sector and the nonprofit sector to be part of the broader civic community in tackling some of our biggest challenges.

And I—just three things that I talked about during my weekly address where this group, I think, is primed to make a difference. Number one, we're spending a lot of time figuring out, how can we make Government work better through technology, digital platforms, and so forth? So, for example, we've reduced the FAFSA form process where you apply for student aid by about two-thirds just by digitalizing it, putting it online, making it a little more commonsense. We have made it now possible to apply for Social Security online in ways that couldn't be done before. Across agencies, we're interacting every day with our Government, and the question is, how do we make that work better?

Mr. Smith. Yes.

The President. Because an antigovernment mentality grows if people feel frustrated because they're not getting good service.

The second thing that these new technologies allow us to do is to tackle big problems in new ways. We had a conference in Washington a few weeks back on what we're calling precision medicine: the capacity today to potentially

cure diseases because we understand the human genome and we understand that a cure for me may not be the same as a cure for you. And there's incredible research taking place all around the country, but we haven't gathered all that data together to make sure that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

And number three, we want to make sure that we're using big data, analytics, technology to make civic participation easier. Voters—increasing voting rates and making sure that people are informed about who they're voting for and why they're voting. Making sure that community organizations or activists are able to meet and help to shape our society in new ways.

So the reason I'm here really is to recruit all of you. It's to say to you as I'm about to leave office, how can we start coming up with new platforms and new ideas, new approaches across disciplines and across skill sets to solve some of the big problems that we're facing today? Because, I've said this before, I said it at the State of the Union, the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. And right now, with all the talent that's out there, our Government is not working and our politics isn't working as well as it should. The only way we're going to solve that is to make sure that we're getting citizens involved in ways that we haven't up until now.

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act/U.S. Digital Service

Mr. Smith. Mr. President, the theory of bringing tech more closely aligned with Government in solving problems is great, but the reality is that the culture of the tech sector and the culture of Government could not be more different. Government is big and bloated and slow and risk averse, and it's run on outmoded systems and outmoded equipment. Tech is sleek and streamlined and fail-fast and enamored of the new and the shiny. How do you take these two things that seem culturally to be so unalike and put them together in a way where they can and want to work together? [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, let me give you an example of the big and the bloated and the frustrating. You may recall that I passed this law called the Affordable Care Act to sign people up for health care. And then the website didn't work. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Smith. I heard that. Heard that, yes.

The President. And this was a little embarrassing for me because I was the cool, early adaptor President. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Smith. Right. Not exactly an advertisement for—[*inaudible*].

The President. And my entire campaign had been premised on having really cool technology and social media and all that. Well, here's what happened, was that the procurement systems, the specifications, the way that software was built in Government was adapted for the age when procurement was for buying boots or buying pencils or buying furniture as opposed to buying software.

And so there's an example of an outdated system, bloated, risk averse, not working well. Here's what happened as a consequence of healthcare.gov breaking down, though: We had to bring in a SWAT team of all my friends from Silicon Valley and from Austin and some of the best software engineers in the world to come in and fix it, which we did in about 3, 4 months' time.

And what we realized was that we could potentially build a SWAT team, a world-class technology office inside of the Government that was helping across agencies.

Mr. Smith. Yes.

The President. We've dubbed that the U.S. Digital Services. And we've got some of the top talent from Google, from Facebook, from all the top tech companies. These folks are coming in, in some cases, for 6 months, in some cases for 2 years, and they are making an enormous difference in making sure that veterans are getting services on time, fixing outdated systems, making sure that agencies like the Small Business Administration that has been clunky, is redesigning itself so that if an entrepreneur wants to start up a business here in Texas, that they can go to one spot and within a day they've handled all the regulatory redtape that used to require them maybe months to navigate.

Now, the folks who are working in this Digital Service, they're having a great time and in part because they are harnessing incredible skills to a purpose where they know that millions of people can be helped.

Mr. Smith. Yes.

The President. And what they'll tell me is that as long as they feel that they've got a President and somebody who's providing some air cover, there's no system that they can't get in there and work and change and make it significantly better.

So part of my job is to try to institutionalize that over the next several years. And I want to make sure that the next President and the Federal Government from here on out is in constant improvement mode and we're constantly bringing in new talent and new ideas to solve some of these big problems. It can be done. It will—it requires some effort, but everything requires some effort.

Government Use of Information Technology/Counterterrorism Efforts

Mr. Smith. Because, Mr. President, you know, I talked to tech people in advance of your coming, and I said, if you were asked by the President or by the administration to come in and work with them, what would the conditions need to be that would make it possible? And they said, well, we would need some kind of a carve-out, some kind of flexibility from rules and regulations. We would be willing to work with the Government; maybe we would then donate back the IP to the public sector. Or if we want to give some of the employees from our payroll the opportunity to work in Government, maybe we could get—as you would with another kind of donation—some sort of a tax break back. We'd be willing to work, but the Government would have to come at least a little bit in our direction. You're saying you're willing to do this?

The President. Well, I'm not saying I'm willing to do it; I'm saying we're doing it.

Mr. Smith. You're doing it now, yes, sir.

The President. It is currently happening.

Mr. Smith. Right.

The President. And the opportunities are there. But I want to focus on the fact that there are different ways for people here to get engaged. It's not just you coming in, although that's—we want to create a pipeline where there's a continuous flow of talent that is helping to shape the Government. The other thing that we're doing, though, is we're also convening people to solve problems, and they may in their existing roles be able to work together to make a huge difference.

I'll give you a specific example. Before I came in here, I met with an incredible group of people—entrepreneurs, moviemakers, organizers, tech leaders—to talk about how we make a real difference on countering violent extremism. It's not enough if we're going to defeat ISIL just to take out their leadership or to control certain territories, if, in the virtual world, they are consistently reaching kids here in the United States or elsewhere in the world and recruiting them and twisting their minds to do terrible things. We've got to be able to penetrate that.

For good reasons, we don't want the Government to be the lead on that. First of all, we're not credible with the people who might be receiving those messages. Second of all, it's dangerous if the Government gets in the business of propaganda. So what I said to them was, we'll help convene and put you guys in a room together. Where there are resources that are necessary, we can help provide it. But essentially, you figure out how we can reach young people who might be vulnerable to extremist messages.

You tell us, based on the analytics and the data and the algorithms that you're working with on a day-to-day basis to sell products, what is it that's going to really penetrate here. How can we amplify powerful stories that are already taking place so that there are platforms that can reach as many people as possible?

Voter Participation

Mr. Smith. So whether you solve the problem or they solve the problem, it's all good?

The President. Exactly.

Mr. Smith. Right.

The President. I'll give you a second example, and that is the issue of voting. I mentioned this earlier. We're the only advanced democracy in the world that makes it harder for people to vote. [*Laughter*] No, I—you're laughing, but it's sad. We take enormous pride in the fact that we are the world's oldest continuous democracy, and yet we systematically put up barriers and make it as hard as possible for our citizens to vote. And it is much easier to order pizza or a trip than it is for you to exercise the single most important task in a democracy, and that is for you to select who is going to represent you in government.

Now, I think it's important for a group like this, as we come up to an election, regardless of your party affiliation, to think about how do we redesign our systems so that we don't have 50-percent or 55-percent voter participation on Presidential elections and during off-year congressional elections you've got 39 or 40 percent voting.

Mr. Smith. Mr. President, you're in the State with the worst voter turnout in the country over the last few years.

The President. By coincidence.

Mr. Smith. We would take 55 percent tomorrow if we could get it. [*Laughter*]

The President. I mean, I—there is a reason I'm bringing this up. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Smith. Yes.

The President. But it's not just Texas. And so one of the things that we're doing is engaging folks who are already doing interesting work in the online space, how can we create safe, secure, smart systems for people to be able to vote much easier online, and what are the technologies to help people get aware of what they're voting about, who they're voting for—that's, again, an issue where you don't want the Federal Government engineering all that.

Mr. Smith. Right.

The President. But what we can do is to have the incredible talent that's represented in this auditorium really spend time thinking about that and getting to work on it.

Mr. Smith. But governments, Mr. President, governments need to play a role in that they have to pass legislation that enables some of these things.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Smith. So in Texas, again, a State with terrible voter turnout over time, we broke records on primary day, but we still had the second worst voting age participation of any State that's voted so far.

The President. Right.

Mr. Smith. We can't get out of our own way. You need, in Texas, legislation that enables this. We won't even allow people to register to vote on—to register to vote, not vote—register online in Texas, register online. We can pay our taxes, we can hold our phone up at the supermarket to pay with our credit card, but somehow, online voter registration is perceived to be insecure, or same-day registration.

The President. It's not insecure. It's done because the folks who are currently governing the good State of Texas—[*laughter*]—aren't interested in having more people participate. I—look, but—[*applause*].

So, obviously, you've got to make a political argument about why this is important, and not every State is going to move along the same direction. But I will tell you that if we can create more and more models that show that if made easier, more people vote, and that it is seamless and that it is secure, and jurisdictions that are willing to adopt and support these new mechanisms are in place, and if we are building more models of civic engagement and using the tools and technology that we're doing—that we're using to buy things to participate in self-governance, then over time—look, Texas is never going to be an early adapter of what I'm talking about here. [*Laughter*] But it—but over time, pressure builds for us to create systems that make Government more responsive and make it work better.

Antigovernment Sentiment/Financial Regulatory Reform/Political Participation

Mr. Smith. Let me stay with Texas and touch on something you alluded to earlier: that there are a lot of people in the world today who don't like government, don't trust government, don't think government can do good. You are

in Texas, the hating-on-government capital of the Western world, right? [*Laughter*] This—we hate government so much we'd rather have no government, except we then wouldn't have anybody to sue. [*Laughter*] So we need government for at least one reason. [*Laughter*] How do you change the perception that government can do good at a moment when people have decided government can't do good?

The President. Yes, I—well, part of it is the fact that when government does great things, we take it for granted, and it's not a story. I mean, every day, government is delivering for everybody in this room, whether you know it or not. I can find the fiercest libertarian in the room with—who despises every level of government, thinks it's all corrupt, thinks—but they're checking the weather on their phone—[*laughter*]—and lo and behold, it turns out that there's a Government satellite out there that——

Mr. Smith. That's government.

The President. ——is facilitating that.

Mr. Smith. Right.

The President. And they'd be really irritated if they couldn't figure out whether it was going to be 70 and sunny or 60 and rainy tomorrow. And—but that's not reported as government. We just take for granted, of course, there are roads, and of course, there's a geosatellite system, and of course, we have special forces who are making sure that folks aren't blowing up our buildings. Well, the—part of our task is to tell a better story about what government does.

Now, government is often its own worst enemy in the sense that it has to also be more responsive where people interact in a direct way with government. I've said before that I could change the politics of America faster than just about anything if I could just take control of all the DMVs in the country. [*Laughter*] Because if somebody goes to get their license renewed and it takes them 2 hours——

Mr. Smith. And they walk away frustrated.

The President. ——and everybody is kind of surly——

Mr. Smith. Right.

The President. ——that's going to—that's their impression of government.

Mr. Smith. Yes.

The President. Or if their primary interaction with government is the IRS, you just don't have a good association with government when you're writing that check. But if we make it easier, if we're—if it's being done online, if suddenly, you have the capacity to interact with government in a way that also gives you some feedback about how your tax dollars are being spent or why this is important for what you're doing, so that it's a two-way exchange as opposed to something that feels distant and that you have no control over, then people's attitudes change.

Now, here's the problem, and this is why politics matter. If there are those who despise government—oftentimes, because the absence of government allows them to pollute or keep as much money as they can or not have to answer to consumers who are complaining about their practices—if they are controlling those who are currently in government and government gets starved of resources, then it can be a self-reinforcing notion that, in fact, government doesn't work because it's being starved.

A great example of this, by the way, I met with financial regulators this week to just get a report back on how we're doing on Wall Street reform. One of the things that the left and the right agree on is that after the financial crisis, nothing changed, and all those folks on Wall Street who had done these terrible things just got away with it, and we didn't change the system, and it's just the way it is now. Well, the truth of the matter is, actually, a lot changed. The banks have been forced to capitalize much more. The—some of the shoddy practices have been shut down. We set up a Consumer Finance Protection Bureau that prevents some of the mortgage practices that had ended up not only hurting individuals, but also destabilizing the entire system. Derivatives now have to be set up on a clearinghouse platform that allows oversight in a way that didn't exist before.

The financial system is much more stable than it used to be. And "too big to fail" actually is much less likely, because if somebody engages in reckless practices we can now unwind them without them bringing down the entire system.

Mr. Smith. So how come we don't know it then?

The President. Well, first of all, that's not a story that is interesting to people. [*Laughter*] What's more interesting is a cynical view that terrible things happened and nothing got changed. And that's how it gets reported both in popular culture as well as in the media.

But the second thing that's happened is, where it's not—where we still have work to do in this space, the main reason we have work to do in this space is because this Congress has prevented oversight agencies like the SEC and the CFTC from having enough staff and resources to be able to enforce as well as they could some of the laws and the rules that are put in place.

And so we go back to the need for civic engagement. We cannot solve the problems in government and we cannot solve the problems that we face collectively as a society unless we, the people, are paying attention.

Mr. Smith. Right.

The President. And in a age in which people are getting information through digital platforms, through the Internet, where people's attention spans have shrunk, it is critical that all of you who are shaping this environment are spending time thinking about how are we getting people—how are we getting citizens engaged, and you yourselves have to be engaged and spend some time thinking about it.

It doesn't mean you have to do it full-time. It doesn't mean that you have to run for office yourself. But it does mean that if—whatever your field is, there is a way right now for you to engage and participate to take this democracy back in ways that we have not seen in a very long time.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009/Broadband Internet Access

Mr. Smith. What you're preaching, Mr. President, again—nobody will take issue with the idea of more civic engagement in a digital age. But the question is whether everybody, all of us in this country, are in the same digital age, right?

You're in a State that is seeing rapid changes in its population. We'll soon be Hispanic majority. Well, in this State, as in a lot of other States, the digital divide—access to Wi-Fi, access to devices continues to be an enormous problem. Fifty percent of adults in Hispanic households have no access to Internet at home.

The President. But the——

Mr. Smith. Fifty-four percent of African Americans have access, but 46 percent do not. Many more White households have access to the Internet than do non-White households. We know that we have this massive digital divide in this country, in Texas and elsewhere. Shouldn't the Government, before we start providing all the civic engagement through the digital space, make sure that everybody is in the digital space first?

The President. Which is, actually, exactly what we've been trying to do over the last several years. When we passed the Recovery Act—the stimulus that was very controversial at the time and that continues to be criticized by the other party, despite the fact that unemployment is now below 5 percent, and we avoided a Great Depression, but—thanks, Obama. [*Laughter*] The—but embedded in that was a massive investment in making sure that communities that had been left out of broadband and Wi-Fi were reached. And we have made enormous progress in extending more and more Internet access—high-speed Internet access to communities all across the country.

A second example: We set up something called ConnectED, where our goal—and we're on track to meet this by 2018—is that 99 percent of classrooms have access to high-speed wireless. And the way we've done that, in part, is through Federal spending, but what we've also done is, we've partnered with an array of companies.

Mr. Smith. Right, private industries.

The President. Private industry has really stepped up.

Mr. Smith. Right.

The President. And so part of the task—you're right that we've got to make sure that, given the power of this space, everybody is

plugged in. But one of the great tricks to all this is making sure that whatever Government is doing is then supplemented with and enhanced by a private sector and nonprofit sectors that are ready to step up. And it's not just, by the way, getting a line in or Wi-Fi there. It's also training teachers. We've set up something called—well, open book? Somebody out here——

Audience member. Open eBooks.

The President. Huh?

Audience member. Open eBooks!

The President. There you go, Open eBooks. [*Laughter*] I knew there was somebody in the audience——

Mr. Smith. Yes, who would know it, right.

The President. ——who'd know about this. [*Laughter*] To make sure that kids in places where—that don't have a lot of books that suddenly they have access to this enormous e-library, and that that becomes folded into the mechanics and the infrastructure that's been set in place.

Political Participation/Antigovernment Sentiment/Government Utilization of Information Technology

Mr. Smith. Right, but Mr. President, very good, it's important to have wired classrooms, but part of the problem is that 70 percent of homework assignments by one measure, given by teachers, require some Internet access.

The President. Right.

Mr. Smith. So it's one thing to wire classrooms; the problem is homes.

There was a story in the New York Times about a month ago that had a couple of kids from McAllen, a brother and sister, standing outside their school building into the wee hours of the night having to do their homework on their phones, using the Wi-Fi from the school after hours because they had no Wi-Fi at home.

The President. Which is why——

Mr. Smith. This is 2016. It just seems crazy.

The President. Which is why we've set up something called Opportunity Networks that is going to go into public housing, rural communities, low-income communities to make sure that access is available precisely so those young people can do the work.

Mr. Smith. You're going to try to solve this problem?

The President. I am trying to solve every problem. But what I'm—[*laughter*]—but here——

Mr. Smith. You've got to have a goal, I understand.

The President. But here's the point that I want to make. These are solvable problems, but it's not a matter of us passively waiting for somebody else to solve it. And that's part of the mindset that I'm trying to break. I tried to break it back in 2007, 2008, when I ran for this office. As you will recall, the slogan was not "yes, I can," it was "yes, we can." [*Laughter*] And we could sit here and you could list out an array of problems, inequities that have to be addressed. What I'm saying is, number one, government actually works better in so many areas than we give it credit for because we tend to focus on those areas where it's not working as well.

Number two, part of the reason that government doesn't always appear to provide a satisfactory solution is because government has to take on the hardest problems. All right? The private sector doesn't have to figure out how to educate the poorest kids. The private sector doesn't have to figure out how to protect us from a terrorist cell. That, so—if you have aging, sick veterans, the private sector may not serve them as well, or to figure out how do we get homeless off the streets.

So the toughest problems are government problems. And finding solutions to those things can take time. And so you're never going to get a hundred-percent satisfaction that—the way you might get that perfect cup of coffee, the perfect latte, or the perfect—the lowest price on your ticket to Cancun—[*laughter*]—because these are harder problems.

But the third point that I'm trying to make here is that if we can reconceive of our government so that the interactions and the interplay between private sector, nonprofits, and government are opened up, and we use technology, data, social media in order to join forces around problems, then there's no problem that

we face in this country that is not soluble. And the key is to have incredible talent, as is gathered here, to focus on it.

It's not enough just to focus on what's the cool next thing. Part of what we have to do is to figure out how do we use and harness the cool next thing to make sure that everybody in this country has opportunity.

Mr. Smith. Well, I want to use——

The President. And make sure that we're dealing with our environment in an effective way.

Mr. Smith. I want to use and harness the time we have. We've got 10 minutes left. We started a little late.

The President. Nice segue. That was good.

Mr. Smith. Thank you, I tried. I appreciate it. Took the baton here, Mr. President. [*Laughter*] I took the baton.

The President. It was good.

Mr. Smith. I've done this before.

The President. It was good. [*Laughter*]

Privacy of Digital Information/Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward J. Snowden/National Security Agency's Electronic Surveillance Program/Digital Encryption

Mr. Smith. There are—we asked for questions from regular folks through the Texas Tribune website. We've got a few of those. And I want to ask you about a couple of those. Some are related to the topics we've been talking about, and some are not. I'm going to go quickly so that we use the time we have.

A bunch of people wanted me to ask you about Apple and the situation with Apple and the FBI. You're trying to persuade the tech community that they should work with Government. But it looks to the tech community—at least some in the tech community—that Government is the enemy of the tech community in the way that it's dealing with Apple. Some in the tech community.

The question I want to ask you is, putting aside the specifics of this specific case, the legal fight between the company and the FBI, there are big questions around the idea of how you balance the need for law enforcement to conduct investigations and the needs of citizens to protect their privacy. This is the old privacy-versus-security debate. Mr. President, where do you come down on the privacy-versus-security debate?

The President. Well, first of all, I can't comment on the specific case.

Mr. Smith. Right.

The President. So let's set that aside.

All of us value our privacy, and this is a society that is built on a Constitution and a Bill of Rights and a healthy skepticism about overreaching Government power. Before smartphones were invented, and to this day, if there is probable cause to think that you have abducted a child or that you are engaging in a terrorist plot or you are guilty of some serious crime, law enforcement can appear before your—at your doorstep and say, I have—we have a warrant to search your home, and they can go into your bedroom and into your bedroom drawers and rifle through your underwear—[*laughter*]—to see if there's any evidence of wrongdoing.

And we agree on that, because we recognize that just like all of our other rights—freedom of speech, freedom of religion, et cetera—that there are going to be some constraints that we impose in order to make sure that we are safe, secure, and living in a civilized society.

Now, technology is evolving so rapidly that new questions are being asked. And I am of the view that there are very real reasons why we want to make sure that Government cannot just, willy-nilly, get into everybody's iPhones that is full of—or smartphones that are full of very personal information and very personal data. And let's face it, the whole Snowden disclosure episode elevated people's suspicions of this. So does popular culture, by the way, which makes it appear as if I'm in the Sit Room and I'm moving things—[*laughter*]—and I'm——

Mr. Smith. You've been watching Homeland or something, yes.

The President. There's, like, half a fingerprint and half an hour later, I'm tracking the guy in the streets of Istanbul. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Smith. It's not nearly that cool?

The President. It turns out, it doesn't work that way.

Mr. Smith. Doesn't work that way.

The President. Sometimes, I'm just trying to get a connection. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Smith. Yes. [*Laughter*] Good.

The President. But look, we—that was a real issue. I will say, by the way, that—and I don't want to go too far afield—but the Snowden issue vastly overstated the dangers to U.S. citizens in terms of spying, because the fact of the matter is, is that actually our intelligence agencies are pretty scrupulous about U.S. persons, people on U.S. soil. What those disclosures did identify were excesses overseas with respect to people who are not in this country.

A lot of those have been fixed. Don't take my word for it. There was a panel that was constituted, an independent panel that just graded all the reforms that we set up to avoid those charges.

But the—I understand that that raised suspicions. All right, so we're concerned about privacy. We don't want Government to be looking through everybody's phones, willy-nilly, without any kind of oversight or probable cause or a clear sense that it's targeted at somebody who might be a wrong doer.

What makes it even more complicated is the fact we also want really strong encryption, because part of us preventing terrorism or preventing people from disrupting the financial system or our air traffic control system or a whole other set of systems that are increasingly digitalized is, is that hackers, state or nonstate, can just get in there and mess them up.

So we've got two values, both of which are important. Right?

Mr. Smith. Right.

The President. And the question we now have to ask is, if technologically, it is possible to make an impenetrable device or system where the encryption is so strong that there's no key, there's no door at all, then how do we apprehend the child pornographer? How do we solve a—or disrupt a terrorist plot? What mechanisms do we have available to even do simple things like tax enforcement? Because if in fact you can't crack that at all, Government can't get in, then everybody is walking around with a Swiss bank account in their pocket, right? So there has to be some concession to the need to be able to get into that information somehow.

Now, what folks who are on the encryption side will argue is any key whatsoever, even if it starts off as just being directed at one device could end up being used on every device. That's just the nature of these systems. That is a technical question. I am not a software engineer. It is, I think, technically true, but I think it can be overstated.

And so the question now becomes, we as a society—setting aside the specific case of—between the FBI and Apple, setting aside the commercial interests, the concerns about what could the Chinese Government do with this if—even if we trust the U.S. Government—setting aside all those questions, we're going to have to make some decisions about how do we balance these respective risks.

And I've got a bunch of smart people sitting there, talking about it, thinking about it. We have engaged the tech community aggressively to help solve this problem. What I—my conclusion so far is, is that you cannot take an absolutist view on this. So if your argument is strong encryption, no matter what, and we can and should, in fact, create black boxes, then I—that, I think, does not strike the kind of balance that we have lived with for 200, 300 years. And it's fetishizing our phones above every other value. And that can't be the right answer.

I suspect that the answer is going to come down to how do we create a system where the encryption is as strong as possible, the key is as secure as possible, it is accessible by the smallest number of people possible for a subset of issues that we agree are important. How we design that is not something that I have the expertise to do.

But I caution—I am way on the civil liberties side of this thing, all right? Bill McRaven will tell you that I anguish a lot over the decisions we make in terms of how to keep this country safe, and I am not interested in overthrowing the values that have made us an exceptional and great nation simply for expediency. But the dangers are real. Maintaining law and order and a civilized society is important.

Protecting our kids is important. And so I would just caution against taking an absolutist perspective on this.

Because we make compromises all the time. We—I haven't flown commercial in a while—[*laughter*]—but my understanding is, it's not great fun——

Mr. Smith. It's not great. It's not great.

The President. ——going through security.

Mr. Smith. No, not great.

The President. But we make the concession because—it's very intrusive—it's a big intrusion on our privacy, but we recognize it as important. We have stops for drunk drivers. It's a—it's an intrusion, but we think it's the right thing to do. And this notion that somehow our data is different and can be walled off from those other tradeoffs we make, I believe, is incorrect.

We do have to make sure, given the power of the Internet and how much our lives are digitalized, that it is narrow and it is constrained and that there's oversight. And I'm confident this is something that we can solve. But we're going to need the tech community—software designers, people who care deeply about this stuff—to help us solve it.

Because what will happen is if everybody goes to their respective corners and the tech community says, you know what, we—either we have strong, perfect encryption, or else it's Big Brother and an Orwellian world, what you'll find is that after something really bad happens, the politics of this will swing and it will become sloppy and rushed, and it will go through Congress in ways that have not been thought through. And then, you really will have a danger to our civil liberties because we will have not done—the people who understand this best and who care most about privacy and civil liberties have sort of disengaged or have taken a position that is not sustainable for the general public as a whole over time.

Mr. Smith. Sadly, Mr. President, the clock is telling me that we're out of time. A lot of things I wanted to ask you. You gave a great answer on that question, and I'm happy to have that be the last bit that we did together. Thank you so much for being here.

The President. I'm the President, so I'm going to take one more minute.

Mr. Smith. You will? Good. Okay.

The President. The—and I just want to say, at——

Mr. Smith. We'll take it.

The President. There are a number of different ways in which all of you can plug into what I've been talking about here today. So if you are interested in figuring out ways to make Government services work better, you can go to whitehouse.gov and—or U.S. Digital Services and find out what they're doing. If you are interested in how we can make sure that classrooms are properly connected, you can plug into what we're doing with ConnectED.

One of my favorite projects that's just gotten started over the last several months is—diapers are really expensive, and we've actually set up a system whereby through social media and the Internet, non-for-profits are able to make bulk purchases of diapers, save 25 percent on those, so that they can distribute them to low-income moms and families. And you've—it's a convergence of diaper makers and logistics companies and Internet companies. And we sort of convened the thing, but it's not running through a Government program.

So whatever your interests are, whatever your passions are, whatever your concerns are, we need you. And I want to underscore the fact that in 10 months I will not have this office. It has been the great privilege of my life, but it's not like I stop caring about the things that I care about right now. And it's not like I'm going to stop being involved in promoting the best, most prosperous, most peaceful, most tolerant, most ecologically responsible America that I can.

I'll be sitting in an audience with you, and I expect you to step up and get involved, because the country needs you. And if the brainpower and talent that's on display here today and throughout this conference takes up that baton, then I'm going to be really confident about the future of this country.

All right.

Mr. Smith. Thank you Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:03 p.m. in the Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Center for the Performing Arts. In his remarks, he referred to William H. McRaven, chancellor, University of Texas System, in his former capacity as commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Mr. Smith referred to McAllen, TX, residents Tony and Isabella Ruiz, who were featured in New York Times reporting on Internet access in the U.S.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in Austin, Texas
March 11, 2016

The President. Hello, Texas! Hello, Austin! Oh, it's good to be back in the great State of Texas. I love me some Austin, Texas, especially. Love Austin.

Audience members. We love you!

The President. I know, it's just like a thing, me and Austin, Texas. We've just got that kind of psychic connection. I love Austin, Texas.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I really do.

So I went to South by Southwest for the first time today. My first—what do they call it?—"Geek Spring Break." [*Laughter*] I was slotted among panels like "Trust Me, I'm an Algorithm." [*Laughter*] There was another one, I think, called "Dude, Where's My Par? Making Virtual Reality Golf." [*Laughter*] True. So I can confirm that you have kept Austin weird. [*Laughter*] You have kept Austin weird.

I want to thank Henry Muñoz, who's been an outstanding DNC chair, one of your own. I want to thank J. Cole for performing. Love J. Cole. No, I do. This is the benefit of having teenage daughters, is, I actually keep up. [*Laughter*] And I got a chance to see J. Cole's mom and grandma. It was so sweet. I told them, on some of the lyrics, you've got to—they've got to hold their ears. [*Laughter*] They were adorable. And his beautiful wife is here.

And will.i.am—I love will.i.am. Will has supported us on so many initiatives across the board, and we're really grateful for him. I want to thank Whurley—cohost—for all the great work he did to make this happen. And I want to thank your own Congressman, Lloyd Doggett. He's doing a great job on your behalf in Congress. We're proud of him.

Audience member. Four more years!

The President. No, I can't do that. [*Laughter*] But I'll talk to you about what we can do.

So, at South by Southwest, I had a serious message. One of our greatest strengths as a country is our tech sector. One of—maybe our greatest strength as a country is that we're big and young and optimistic. We've got this incredibly digitally fluent young generation. And this generation is changing the way we do everything. So I went to "South-by" to ask more of them to serve their country; to put their skills to work helping folks; to help modernize our democracy; to make our Government as smart and innovative and inclusive and dynamic as it can be.

Engaging people in a cause is really what our democracy is all about. And whether it's over questions of war and peace or opportunity and inequality or equal rights and equal justice, we're at our best when citizens are participating.

And that's why you're all here. That's what we did in 2008. Some of you were there for that ride. As we were driving in—part of the reason I love Austin is, this is where I had probably my first really big rally. It was only a couple months after I announced, and we had kind of a small venue, and then, there was a larger venue, and then, it got a little larger, and next thing you knew, we were out in a field with 23,000 people.

And it was kind of drizzling, but everybody was so enthusiastic. And I saw a guy as I was walking up to the podium who had this cool black cowboy hat. I said, nice hat! [*Laughter*] And he said, here. [*Laughter*] And he gave me his hat. And it fit me perfectly, and I looked really cool in this hat. [*Laughter*] And I'm trying to find this hat; I don't know where it is.

[*Laughter*] But where was I? [*Laughter*] I just started talking about this hat because I've got this fond memory. [*Laughter*]

But if people get involved, then there's nothing we can't do. If anybody ever tells you elections don't matter, think about what that election in 2008 meant. All right?

When I took office, we were losing 800,000 jobs a month; unemployment rate going to 10 percent. Today, our businesses have created jobs for 72 straight months, 6 straight years, 14.3 million new jobs, unemployment below 5 percent. That is change. That's what you did with that election.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I can't do that.

When I took office, American manufacturing was in a decade of decline, auto industry flatlining. Today, we just about sold as many as autos as we've ever sold in history. Over the past 6 years, created nearly 900,000 new manufacturing jobs. That is change. That's what you made happen by getting involved.

When I took office, tens of millions of Americans went without the security of health insurance. Today, thanks to the Affordable Care Act, a.k.a. Obamacare, 20 million more Americans are covered—20 million. For the first time ever, more than 90 percent of Americans are covered. And by the way, since I signed that quote, unquote, job-killing, liberty-destroying bill, our businesses have created jobs every single month. The pace at with—at which health care inflation has gone up, it's been the slowest in 50 years.

Audience member. Yes!

The President. The life of Medicare has been extended. We've saved well over a hundred billion dollars because of the way that it's helped to control costs. And by the way, we'd be doing even better if the State of Texas had some sense and actually provided Medicaid to people who need it here in Texas.

I mean, this is not in the prepared remarks, but I just have to editorialize here. [*Laughter*] It is inconceivable of me that, for ideological reasons and just pure politics, that anybody would want to prevent hard-working, low-income people from having some kind of reliable health care——

Audience member. Right?

The President. ——especially when the overwhelming majority of the costs are picked up by the Federal Government and not by the State. I mean, this is just out of spite, leaving people who could have health insurance—health insurance. That's a decision that's made at the State level. It's not necessary. It doesn't make sense.

But when I took office, we were hopelessly addicted to foreign oil. Today, we've cut our imports by more than half. We've tripled the power we generate from wind, generate 30 times more solar power than we did. We're still—we have produced oil at an incredible pace, and natural gas, but we're also leading the world to combat a changing climate. Helping to lead the world to get serious about how we transition to a clean energy economy and preserve this planet for the kids who are in this audience. That happened because of you.

When I took office, 180,000 troops were in harm's way in Iraq and Afghanistan. We've brought 90 percent of them home. We are so grateful for their service and their sacrifice. They made us safer. And now we're pursuing a broader vision that uses every element of our national power, including diplomacy, to keep America safe and strong. That is change that you brought about because of your participation.

When I took office, the right to marry who you love was limited to two States. Today, it's guaranteed in 50 States, from coast to coast. That's change you can believe in.

I'm telling you, Texas, we've been as busy as a hound in flea season. [*Laughter*] We're busy. And we're still busy, still hustling. We're not letting the grass grow under our feet. We've got more work to do. But——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes, yes. So the point, though, is that when the cynics told us we couldn't change the country, they were dead wrong. We proved them wrong. Think about it. If somebody told you 7 years ago we'd have 4.9-percent unemployment, 20 million newly

uninsured—newly insured, gas at a buck-eighty, deficits cut by three-quarters, marriage equality a reality, bin Laden out of the picture, Wall Street reform in place, you wouldn't have believed it. You would have said we were hollering down a well.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I can't do that.

But these are facts, I'm not making them up. I mean, imagine what Trump would say if he actually had a record like this. Instead of selling steaks. [*Laughter*] Has anybody tried that wine? [*Laughter*] How good can that wine be? [*Laughter*] I'm sorry. Where was I?

You've got all these candidates on the other side tripping all over themselves to talk down the economy when it is the bright spot in the world economy. You've got folks talking about how weak America is when we're the most powerful nation on Earth. You've got these folks saying immigration is our biggest crisis when illegal immigration is lower than it's been in 40 years. Folks who say climate change isn't real when last year was the warmest year on record. It's just—bless their hearts, it is just a different reality that they're talking about.

So here's the truth. Look it up. America is pretty darn great right now. America is moving forward right now. The American people should be proud of what we achieved together right now. But what we should be focused on is how we can do even better, build on the progress we've made, not reverse it.

And instead, we've got a debate inside the other party that is fantasy and schoolyard taunts and selling stuff like it's the Home Shopping Network. [*Laughter*] And then you've got the Republican establishment. They're very exercised: We're shocked that somebody would be saying these things. We're shocked that they're—somebody is fanning anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-Muslim sentiment. We're shocked!

Audience member. Boo!

The President. We're shocked that somebody could be loose with the facts. [*Laughter*] Or distort someone's record—shocked! [*Laughter*] I—how can you be shocked? [*Laughter*] This is the guy, remember, who was sure that I was born in Kenya. [*Laughter*] Who just wouldn't let it go. [*Laughter*] And all this same Republican establishment, they weren't saying nothing. As long as it was directed at me, they were fine with it. They thought it was a hoot. Wanting to get his endorsement. And then, now, suddenly, we're shocked—[*laughter*]—that there's gambling going on in this establishment. [*Laughter*]

What is happening—what's happening in this primary is just a distillation of what's been happening inside their party for more than a decade. I mean, this—the reason that many of their voters are responding is because this is what's been fed through the messages they've been sending for a long time: that you just make flat assertions that don't comport with the facts; that you just deny the evidence of science; that compromise is a betrayal; that the other side isn't simply wrong, or we just—we disagree, we want to take a different approach, but the other side is destroying the country or treasonous. I mean, that's—look it up. That's what they've been saying.

So they can't be surprised when somebody suddenly looks and says, you know what, I can do that even better. [*Laughter*] I can make stuff up better than that. [*Laughter*] I can be more outrageous than that. I can insult people even better than that. I can be even more uncivil. I mean, conservative outlets have been feeding their base constantly the notion that everything is a disaster, that everybody else is to blame, that Obamacare is destroying the country. And it doesn't matter whether it's true or not. It's not, "We disagree with this program; we think we can do it better." It's, "No, this is a crisis!"

So if you don't care about the facts or the evidence or civility, in general, in making your arguments, you will end up with candidates who will say just about anything and do just about anything. And when your answer to every proposal that I make or Democrats make is no, it means that you've got to become more and more unreasonable because that's the only way you can say no to some pretty reasonable stuff.

And then, you shouldn't be surprised when your party ultimately has no ideas to offer at all. [*Laughter*]

Now, I want to be very clear. There are thoughtful conservatives—[*laughter*]—good people in the Republican Party, good people who are Republican voters who care about poverty, and they care about climate and don't resort to insults and are troubled by what's happening inside their own party. I know them. I've talked to them. But they've got to acknowledge why this happened, because some of them have been writing that, well, the reason our party is going crazy is because of Obama—[*laughter*]—which is a pretty novel idea. [*Laughter*] Right? The notion is, Obama drove us crazy. [*Laughter*]

Now, the truth is, what they really mean is, their reaction to me was crazy—[*laughter*]—and now it has gotten out of hand. [*Laughter*] But that's different. I didn't cause the reaction. [*Laughter*] The reaction is something that they have to take responsibility for and then figure out, how do we make an adjustment?

Because my question to the folks who are suddenly so spun up is, where have you been the past 5, 6, 7 years? I don't take pleasure in seeing what's going on, on the other side. We need a healthy two-party system. We've got to have serious debate. And Democrats need to have somebody who is questioning and challenging some of our own dogmas and our own blind spots. And each party has to have some mechanism to be self-critical and step back and say, all right, are we really trying to solve problems here or just trying to score points and win elections?

And that's one of the reasons why I'm proud of our party right now. We are having serious debates about serious ideas. As Democrats, we believe the economy grows faster when everybody gets a fair shot, not just the few. As Democrats, we know we can't let Republicans roll back on progress by letting big banks or big oil or hedge funds make their own rules at the expense of everybody else. And we've got to build on that progress and rebuild our infrastructure and raise the minimum wage and make college more affordable and meet our obligations to the poor and the vulnerable.

We know, as Democrats, we've got to treat family leave and paid leave like the economic priorities that they are. We know that, as Democrats, we stand for the proposition that all people are created equal and deserving of respect. We believe that in a country as wealthy as ours, everybody should have access to health care, and we can't let Republicans kick millions off of their insurance or take us back to the days where women could be charged more on their insurance just for being women.

Right here in Texas, your Governor is preventing 1.1 million more Texans from getting health care through Medicaid.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. He's keeping 40,000 women from getting the mammograms they need every year just out of spite and ideology.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. He could change that with a simple stroke of his pen. And that's why elections matter.

As Democrats, we believe in things like science. We're not wasting time debating whether or not climate change is real. We're working to create even more good clean energy jobs that pay better than average. Right here in Texas, wind power is cheaper now than dirty fossil fuels. You're proving that Texas is more than just oil country, it's energy country. So we can't let Republicans roll back the progress by letting special interests write their own rules. We can't keep on subsidizing the past. We've got to invest in the future, and that's what we believe in.

As Democrats, our top national security priority is protecting the American people, going after terrorist networks. And for a year and a half, America has led a coalition of more than 60 countries to hunt down and destroy ISIL. But we don't do it with phony bluster, we're doing it with more than 10,000 airstrikes. We won't build on that progress with just a bunch of cheap, tough talk and over-the-top claims. We're not going to strengthen our leadership around the world by allowing politicians to insult Muslims or pit groups of Americans

against each other. We'll keep America safe and strong and respected by using every element of our power. That's what we believe in.

And we believe in a better politics that reflects what's best in us, not what's worst in us. We do strive to hold ourselves to a higher standard. I mean, we care if things aren't fact-checked—somebody does a fact check and says that's not right—and we don't just say it, figuring nobody is going to notice. [*Laughter*] We've got to—we have to conduct ourselves with civility and with principle, by telling folks what they need to hear, even when it's hard. And we, as Democrats, believe that our right to vote should be easier to exercise, not harder.

I want to spend just a second on this. We are rightly proud of the fact that we are the oldest continuous democracy in the world. We have—we were blessed with not just an amazing landmass, but with probably as great a collection of leaders as has ever convened, who drafted this incredible document, the Constitution, and a Bill of Rights. And then, we were blessed by an amazing President from Illinois who helped free—[*laughter*]—no, not—this was an earlier one—[*laughter*]—who oversaw this terrible tragedy, but was able to bring the country back together again and to enshrine in those constitutional documents amendments that would ensure, truly ensure, that all people were treated equally.

And the notion that in this great democracy that we cherish that we would purposely make it harder for people to vote is shameful. It's shameful whether you are—whatever your party. It can't be something we're proud of. The history of restricting the franchise in this country is not a good history. That's not the best part of our history, it's the—part of the worst of our history: poll taxes, violence, threats to prevent people from voting.

And so the idea that any tool we used that we knew made it harder for people to vote, that's not something that is who we are. That's not what we should stand for. And I say that not on a partisan basis. It's just—it's not right.

Audience member. Here, here!

The President. And here in Texas, Republicans have made it harder to register; they've made it harder to vote. And it's made a difference. Four years ago, Texas ranked in the bottom five in voter turnout. Two years ago, Texas ranked in the bottom three. And it wasn't an accident. You've got 16 million eligible voters and 7 million unregistered.

So one of my message to all of you: Let's prove that if in fact everything is bigger in Texas, let's—instead of showing that the number of people who can't find a way to vote is bigger in Texas, let's get as many people registered in Texas and as many people to the polls in Texas as possible. Don't mess with Texas's right to vote!

Democrats, we believe in these things because we believe every voice matters. Black, White, Asian, Latino, gay, straight, immigrant, native born. That's who we are. That's who Texas is. This State is home to everybody, including immigrants from around the world. That's who America is, what makes us great.

That's what makes me proud also to be a Democrat. Because if you look around this auditorium, we are reflective of what America is. We believe that in this country, everybody deserves an equal shot.

Audience member. That's right!

The President. We fight for everybody who hasn't had the same chances that we had. We fight to leave our kids an America where no matter who you are or what you look like or where you come from or who you love, you can make it if you try.

We believe in the proposition that we don't just look after our own kids, but we also are thinking about some kids who aren't as lucky as our kids. Because we know that in the future, the well-being of our kids is dependent on how well the whole community is doing, and we want everybody's kids to have a chance at success.

That's what's at stake this year. That's what's at stake. I don't have to tell you, the stakes are big. And that's why I am so—not those steaks. [*Laughter*] S-t-a-k-e-s. That's why I'm so proud to have you all on the team. But I want to say this. Many of you showed incredible passion and enthusiasm on my behalf, on our behalf, in '08. Many of you stepped up again——

Audience member. Love you!

The President. ——in '12, even after we'd gone through incredible challenges. But this has never been about a single candidate. It has never been about a single President. We are relay runners. We take a baton; we grab it. We run our leg as fast as we can. We make sure that we then pass that baton to the next folks up. We make sure that the handoff is clean.

We've got a couple of outstanding people who are currently running for President. We've got some great candidates across the board for every office in the land.

Audience member. Yes!

The President. During primary season, I want everybody to be passionate about who they're supporting because that's what we do. That's how democracy works. But I want to make sure that when we start getting closer to November, the urgency, the commitment, the moral compass, the belief in what's possible that allowed me this incredible privilege to serve you on—as President of the United States, I want to make sure that you just work just as hard—and harder—to make sure that that continues. All right?

Give me that promise that you're going to work just as hard. Give me that promise that you're not going to succumb to cynicism. Give me that promise that we're not finished yet. We're going to keep it going. Do you promise? You promise me?

Thank you, Texas. Thank you, Austin. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:57 p.m. at the Austin Music Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Henry R. Muñoz III, national finance committee chairman, Democratic National Committee; musicians Jermaine Lamarr Cole and William J. "will.i.am" Adams, Jr.; Kay Cole, mother, and Melissa Heholt, wife, of Mr. Cole; William "Whurley" Hurley, chief executive officer, Honest Dollar; Donald J. Trump, chairman and chief executive officer, Trump Organization, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate; Gov. Gregory W. Abbott of Texas; and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sen. Bernard Sanders, in their capacity as Democratic Presidential candidates. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Austin
March 11, 2016

Thank you, guys! Thank you. Well, first of all, I'm going to be brief in the formal remarks so you can get some food—[*laughter*]—because I was starving.

The Rudys have been just extraordinary friends. And to see not only the two of them devote so much time and energy to our efforts over these years, but to see what incredible kids they've raised and now a couple of them are getting married. One of them is already married, and another one is about to get married. [*Laughter*] I'm sorry, was that not public? [*Laughter*] You've got to warn—if you put me in front of a mike, I'm just going to spit all your business out there. [*Laughter*] Don't worry about it, it's just the New York Times here.

It just reminds you that, in this process, we build communities; that it's not just tactics and strategy and votes. It's not just a mechanical process. You build relationships, and you build friendships and build trust. And the Rudys, I think, are great examples of that, and Amy, are great examples of that. And many of you in this room are.

So my first job is just to say thank you to all of you for the incredible efforts that you've made in the past and thank you to the city of Austin, which I truly love. When I go to every city, I say I love the city. [*Laughter*] But Austin, I really—I really love Austin, Texas. I really do. I really do.

And let me also just point out that that baby is super cute. [*Laughter*] Just another observa-

tion. [*Laughter*] Another insight from your President. That's a cute baby.

When I think back to the beginnings of those campaigns, obviously, the journey we've traveled has been unlikely, and yet I think we can take enormous pride of what we've accomplished. I was over earlier at a larger event, and I emphasized that although there's a lot more work to be done, if you had told us back in 2007, 2008 that we would get 4.9-percent unemployment rate, that we would cut the deficit by two-thirds, that we'd get 20 million people health insurance, that we'd have Wall Street reform in place that has made our financial system much more stable, that we would have gotten 90 percent of our troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan, that we would have gotten bin Laden, that we would have increased solar power by 30 percent and wind power threefold and been able to reduce our carbon emission pace more than any other advanced nation on Earth, and get a climate change agreement with 200 countries and make sure that everybody in this Nation can marry who they love in every State in the Union, and get two outstanding women on our Supreme Court confirmed—well, the list goes on; it's a long list—we would have said that's change we can believe in.

I've said before, I keep a checklist in my desk from way back in 2007, 2008, and we're batting about 80 percent. And even in those areas where we have been blocked congressionally, we can show progress administratively in how our Government operates and what it's doing to advance the values that we care about.

And yet, despite these extraordinary accomplishments that you and I did together, despite the fact that I'm doing fine politically in terms of perceptions across the country, it's also undeniable that we live at a time of anxiety and cynicism and frustration, and we see that manifested in our politics. And so the question is, where is the mismatch? What's going on? And some of it is, people felt the ground shift under their feet during the financial crisis, and they remember that. And so even if they're doing okay now, they're still feeling pretty insecure.

Some of it is that we have not fully reversed the trends that led me to want to run in the first place when it comes to income and wages going up. We were able to rescue the economy from crisis, but you're still seeing growing inequality. And there are a lot of factors for that, but some of it is that we haven't been able to move as aggressively as we'd like to make sure that collective bargaining is strong in this country, to make sure that minimum wages are higher than they should be, to make sure that we have more tools for equal pay for women doing the same job as men are doing.

We still are seeing, when it comes to women's reproductive health—despite what we did with the ACA and the prevention work that we did—constant efforts to just restrict in very concrete, tangible ways access to basic services that women need.

And so part of the challenge here is, is that as much as we've gotten done, there's just a lot left to do. And some of those big trends are ones that are scaring people. And some of it is the fact that people recognize what we've been able to accomplish, we accomplished despite, rather than with, the cooperation of a functioning Washington. And many people feel that, you know what, Obama has done a pretty good job managing what is a broken system, but it's still a broken system, and so what we need is to completely dismantle it, and we're willing to listen to whatever voices are out there about dismantling it.

And so it's understandable what's going on right now, and it can produce a troubling politics. But I'm here to tell you that in my travels during the last 7½ years, and it is as true today as it was when I first came to Austin back in 2007, the American people themselves—what they do, how they operate, how they treat each other—we're solid, we're in a good place. And it remains our job to make sure that the goodness and decency of the American people syncs up with our politics.

And it's precisely because of that conviction that, for me, my most important project—in addition to protecting the American people and going after ISIL and continuing to deal with some of the destabilizing activities that

are going on in the Middle East and making sure that we finish what we started on our power plant rule and all those things—one of my most important jobs is just to make sure that the American people are participating and involved and engaged in this election process so that if in fact they come out, then the outcome will be fine. I'm absolutely convinced of that. I'm absolutely convinced that we will have a Democratic successor as President. I believe we will take back the United States Senate. I think we will make real progress with respect to the House. But it depends on people feeling as if that can happen and being engaged and working just as hard and just as full of hope as they did in 2008. And that's going to depend on me, but it's also going to depend on you. It's going to depend on each of us.

And so my main message to Democrats over the course of the next several months—I'm sure I'll be saying, "Write checks," because that's part of the process—but what I'm really going to be saying to people is keep your eyes on the prize here. Change doesn't happen overnight, and we never get 100 percent of change. And by the way, we shouldn't. Our system is not designed that way. This is a big country, and it's a messy country. And there are people who disagree with us in this room on a whole bunch of stuff, and many of those folks are perfectly decent people, even if sometimes they're following folks who are cynical and saying things that are harmful to our society.

So we shouldn't get 100 percent of what we want. But that shouldn't stop us from really feeling empowered by the changes we can actually bring about if we work hard, we stay focused. I'm absolutely convinced that if we do, then just as we can look back over the last 7½ years and look at the amazing progress we've made, we'll be able to look back 7 years from now and say minimum wage is higher and paid family leave and sick leave is in place and early childhood education we have gotten accomplished, and we've been able to make sure that women's reproductive health issues remain the decision of women and equal pay for equal work is in place, and we've been able to make sure that our criminal justice system is keeping us safe, but also fair and just and proportional and treats everybody the same.

It's right there. And it just requires us to believe that and then to work for it. And you guys are going to have to be a part of that. And it's hard in Texas, I know, because sometimes Austin feels like this little island. The waves are washing over you. [*Laughter*] And you're sending out messages in a bottle, hoping that somewhere out there they'll be received, and there are like-minded people out there somewhere who you can make common cause with. Well, they're there. They're there in Texas. You just got a bunch of laws that are keeping them from voting.

So I feel greatly encouraged right now. And I'm—people have been remarking, "You seem, like, really happy and like you're enjoying yourself." I am, because I've seen what's possible. I've seen what we've been able to do. And I think when people step back and get some perspective, they'll say we did good. And if we work hard, we can do some more good. So let's get to work.

Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:54 p.m. at the residence of Kirk and Amy Rudy. In his remarks, he referred to Supreme Court Associate Justices Sonia M. Sotomayor and Elena Kagan. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
March 12, 2016

Hello, everybody. This past week, we lost an American icon and one of the most influential figures of her time: former First Lady Nancy Reagan. Born in New York City and raised mostly in Chicago, Nancy Davis graduated from Smith College in 1943. As an actress, she

appeared in 11 films. And off screen, she starred in a real-life Hollywood romance with the love of her life, Ronald Reagan, whom she married in 1952.

As President, I know just how important it is to have a strong life partner, and President Reagan was as lucky as I am. Nancy Reagan redefined the role of First Lady of the United States. In addition to serving as a trusted adviser to her husband and an elegant hostess for our Nation, she was a passionate advocate for issues that touched the lives of so many. She raised awareness about drug and alcohol abuse. She was a staunch supporter of America's veterans. And after her own battle with breast cancer and a mastectomy, she spoke in personal terms about the need for women to get mammograms.

The American people were deeply moved by the love Nancy felt for her husband. And we were inspired by how, in their long goodbye, Nancy became a voice on behalf of millions of families experiencing the depleting, aching reality of Alzheimer's disease. She brought her characteristic intelligence and focus to the twin causes of stem cell research and Alzheimer's research. And when I signed an order to resume Federal stem cell research, I was proud that she was one of the first phone calls I made. Nobody understood better than Nancy Reagan the importance of pursuing treatments that hold the potential and the promise to improve and save lives.

That's why, last year, my administration announced the Precision Medicine Initiative to advance our ability to tailor health care and treat diseases like cancer and Alzheimer's by accounting for individual differences in people's genes, environments, and lifestyles. Last month, we took new actions to foster more collaboration between researchers, doctors, patients, data systems, and beyond to accelerate precision medicine. And more than 40 organizations stepped up with new commitments in this cutting-edge field. We've also launched the BRAIN Initiative to revolutionize our understanding of how the human brain works.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of people like Nancy Reagan, I've never been more optimistic that we are getting closer to the day when every single patient can get the care they need and deserve. I've never been more optimistic that we will one day find a cure for devastating diseases like Alzheimer's. And I can think of no better way to honor our former First Lady's legacy than by working together, as one Nation, toward that goal.

Thanks, everybody.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:50 p.m. on March 10 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on March 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 11, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 12. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Democratic Hope Fund Reception in Dallas, Texas
March 12, 2016

The President. Hello, Dallas, Texas! Oh, it is good to see all of you! Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. It is good to see you on a Saturday morning. There's a good-looking crowd here.

You know, I think Ron Kirk wants to run for something again. [*Laughter*] Matrice, he came up here, he's starting to get kind of—he was getting into it, wasn't he? [*Laughter*] I'm telling you. Listen, I love me some Ron Kirk. I really do. It's true I love Matrice more. [*Laughter*] But Ron and Matrice could not be better friends. And he was not only a great mayor of this city, but he was a great Ambassador on our behalf all across the country. So please give him a big round of applause.

Your current mayor, Mike Rawlings, is here. He reminds me that he had to clean up all kinds of stuff after Ron was mayor, but—[*laughter*]—it's turned out okay. One of our

most wonderful Representatives, and somebody who's been an incredible friend and partner to me over the years during my Presidency, Eddie Bernice Johnson. Give her a big round of applause. She's always had my back. And Hall of Famer and dear friend and really a pretty good dancer, Emmitt Smith is in the house. Looking sharp in his three-piece.

So I came to Texas because I wanted to visit South by Southwest yesterday. And I had a great time. And it's a fun event, it's an interesting event. For those of you who have not been there, there's a lot of tech folks and new ideas. And I was slotted among a panel—there were a bunch of different panels, like "Keep Mars Weird" was one panel. [*Laughter*] And then there was "Robot Armageddon." That was another panel. [*Laughter*] And I decided to keep quiet and not remind people that there actually is a robot rover on Mars. They might have not—anyway. [*Laughter*] But it was wonderful to be in Austin. It's wonderful to be in Dallas.

And we're here today because we know how deeply this year's elections matter. If anybody tells you elections do not matter, think about 2008. Some of you were along for that ride. You know how much that election mattered. And the one after that. Because when I took office, we were losing 800,000 jobs a month, and unemployment was on its way to 10 percent. And today, our businesses have created jobs for 72 straight months: 6 straight years, 14.3 million new jobs; unemployment below 5 percent. That's change. That's what we fought for. That's why elections matter.

When I took office, American manufacturing was in a decade of decline and the auto industry was flat on its back. And today, the auto industry just had its best year ever. And over the past 6 years, we've created 900,000 new manufacturing jobs. That's why elections matter. That's what change is all about.

When I took office, tens of millions of Americans went without the security of health insurance. And today, thanks to the Affordable Care Act, also known as——

Audience members. Obamacare!

The President. ——Obamacare, 20 million more Americans are covered. And for the first time ever, more than 90 percent of Americans have health insurance. That is change. And they said it was going to kill jobs, but ever since I signed that bill into law, our businesses have created jobs every single month right here in the United States of America.

When I took office, we were hopelessly addicted to foreign oil. Today, we've cut our imports by more than half. Oil and natural gas production in the United States is at an alltime high, but we've also tripled the power we generate from wind. We generate 30 times more solar power than we did when I came into office, leading the world to combat climate change; creating good, new clean energy jobs. That's change that you can believe in. That's why elections matter.

When I took office, 180,000 troops were serving in harm's way in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today, about 90 percent of those folks are home. And we could not be more grateful for their service and their sacrifice. And we are also glad that they are reunited with their families. And we still have a job to do going after ISIL and those who would do us harm. But we're pursuing a broader vision that uses every element of our national power, including diplomacy, to keep America safe and to keep America strong.

When I took office, the right to marry who you love was limited to two States. Now it's in all 50 States, from coast to coast. That's change you can believe in.

So we've been busy. [*Laughter*] We've been busy. We've been as busy as a one-eyed dog in a smokehouse. [*Laughter*] I heard that saying while I was down here. And we're still busy, still hustling, got more work to do. When cynics told us we could not change this country that we love so much, they were wrong. If somebody had told you 7 years ago that we'd have 4.9-percent unemployment and 20 million newly insured and gas at a buck-eighty and deficits cut by three-quarters and marriage equality a reality and bin Laden out of the picture, you wouldn't have bought what they were selling. You'd have said, oh, they were just hollering down a well. [*Laughter*]

But the truth of the matter is, America is pretty darn great right now. America is making strides right now. America is better off than it was right now. The American people should be proud about what we've achieved together over the last 8 years since the recession hit. We're great right now!

And what the folks who are running for office should be focused on is how we can make it even better. Not insults and schoolyard taunts and manufacturing facts. Not divisiveness along the lines of race or faith. Certainly not violence against other Americans or excluding them. We're a better country than that.

And what's been happening in our politics lately is not an accident. For years, we've been told we should be angry about America and that the economy is a disaster and that we're weak and that compromise is weakness and that you can ignore science and you can ignore facts and say whatever you want about the President and feed suspicion about immigrants and Muslims and poor people and people who aren't like "us" and say that the reason that America is in decline is because of "those" people.

That didn't just happen last week. That narrative has been promoted now for years. It didn't just spring out of nowhere. And of course, none of it has been true. It just ignores reality: the reality that America is the most powerful nation on Earth. The reality that our economy is not only stronger than it was 8 years ago, that it's right now the bright spot in the world. That our diversity is a strength—a great gift—that makes us the envy of every other nation.

So the narrative that's been pushed is false, demonstrably false. And we shouldn't be surprised then when, in the heat of political season, it starts getting carried away. But we've got to say no to that. We can have political debates without turning on one another. We can have political debates without thinking that the people who disagree with us are all motivated by malice. We can support candidates without treating their opponents as unpatriotic or treasonous or somehow deliberately trying to weaken America. That's not just one candidate who's been saying that; some of the so-called more responsible candidates, including a gentleman from this State—no, no, you read what he says, it's not—it's no more rooted in reality than some of these other statements. We can point out bad policies without describing them as a "Government takeover" or "an assault on freedom."

And by the way, when I say this, this is not about "political correctness." It's about not having to explain to our kids why our politics sounds like a schoolyard fight. We shouldn't be afraid to take them to rallies or let them watch debates. They watch the way we conduct ourselves. They learn from us. And we should be teaching them something about this democracy is a vibrant and precious thing. It's going to be theirs someday, and we should be teaching them how to disagree without being disagreeable and how to engage and how to analyze facts and how to be honest and truthful and admit if you make a mistake and teach them that politics at its best is about a battle of ideas and resolving our differences without encouraging or resorting to violence.

And our leaders, those who aspire to be our leaders should be trying to bring us together and not turning us against one another and speak out against violence and reject efforts to spread fear or turn us against one another. And if they refuse to do that, they don't deserve our support. The best leaders, the leaders who are worthy of our votes, remind us that even in a country as big and diverse and inclusive as ours, what we've got in common is far more important than what divides any of us.

In 2008, we had rallies with 50,000, 80,000, 100,000 people. I'm not bragging, I'm just saying we had some big rallies. Sometimes, you hear folks say, oh, that rally is big. I say, I don't know. [*Laughter*] We had some pretty big rallies. I'm just saying. We had one in Austin, Texas—Ron remembers this, he was there—20,000 people, more than 20,000 people back in Austin.

And I was telling the folks down in Austin, you remember—I saw a guy, he had a nice-looking black cowboy hat. I said, that's a nice hat. And he took it off, and he handed it to me.

He said, you take it. And it fit really good. [*Laughter*] I looked really good in it, and somebody took a picture of it. But I can't find that hat.

Audience members. Aww.

The President. So if you're still out there, sir——

[*At this point, an audience member offered his cowboy hat to the President.*]

The President. No, man, that looks good on you, brother, but I—when I come down to shake hands, I may see if it fits. That's why I love Texas, right there.

But my point, going back—I got a little waylaid—Americans were frustrated back then too, upset about the wars in Iraq, anxious about the housing crisis, anxious about the financial crisis that eventually would send the markets plunging and unemployment soaring and people losing their homes and their pensions. And all that happened while we were campaigning. But somebody who went to those rallies, there wasn't a spirit of anger or meanness. People were hopeful. People were looking about, how do we bring folks together?

We tried to offer something different. We tried to offer something better. We believed that we were greater together; that we're not as divided as our politics suggest. And as Democrats, that's what we've got to keep offering now, a politics that reflects the best in us and not the worst in us. We've got to strive to hold ourselves to a higher standard. We've got to do better. We've got to offer a better path for America.

And we know what we believe. And by the way, when you know what you believe, when you know what you're for, you don't have to spend all your time trying to find somebody to be against. We believe the economy grows faster when everybody gets a fair shot, not just a few people. And we're not going to let Republicans roll back our progress by letting big banks or hedge funds make their own rules at the expense of everybody else. We're going to build on our progress and rebuild our infrastructure, raise the minimum wage, and make college more affordable; and meet our obligations to the poor and the vulnerable; and work on family leave and paid leave and early education, so that everybody gets a shot at life. That's what we believe. That's what we're about. We're for something, not just against something.

Audience member. Four more years!

The President. No, I can't do that.

We believe that in a country as wealthy as ours, everybody should have access to health care. And we made progress, but we've got more to do. Right here in Texas, your Governor could cover over a million more Texans under Medicaid with the stroke of a pen; 40,000 women could get mammograms that need it each year with the stroke of a pen. He won't do it, not because it's not the right thing to do, but because of politics. And we should not be putting people's health ahead of politics; we should be putting people's health ahead of politics. Shouldn't be putting politics ahead of health care.

As Democrats, we believe in things like science. It has resulted in great improvements in our lives. Science—that's why we have things like penicillin and airplanes. [*Laughter*] So we appreciate science. We appreciate scientists. And when scientists tell us that climate change is real, we should not be wasting time debating whether climate change is real. We're working together to make sure we create good clean energy jobs that pay better than average.

Right now, here in Texas, wind power is already cheaper than dirty fossil fuels. We can't let Republicans roll back this progress by letting special interests write their own rules and just keep on subsidizing the past instead of investing in the future. That's what we believe in. We're not just against something, we're for something.

Does anybody have any idea what the other side is for right now?

Audience members. No!

Audience member. What are they for?

The President. I don't know. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. They don't either!

The President. They don't. That's why they're selling wine. I had to say to—I told the folks down in Austin, I said, has anybody

bought that wine? [*Laughter*] I want to know what that wine tastes like. [*Laughter*] I mean, come on, you know that's, like, some $5 wine. [*Laughter*] They slap a label on it, they charge you $50, saying this is the greatest wine ever. [*Laughter*] Come on! [*Laughter*] Oh, boy—selling wine. [*Laughter*] That's not what we're for. Couldn't make it up. [*Laughter*]

As Democrats, our top national security priority is protecting the American people, going after terrorist networks. For over a year and a half, we've led a coalition of more than 60 countries, hunting down and destroying ISIL: going after their financial networks, going after their leadership, going after their infrastructure. We don't do it with phony bluster. We don't go around talking stuff; we do. More 10,000 airstrikes. Our men and women in uniform, our special forces right there taking care of business.

Progress is not made by over-the-top claims and suggestions that we're going to carpet bomb innocent people. That doesn't strengthen America's leadership around the world. We don't strengthen our position, our standing, we don't make ourselves safer by insulting Muslims around the world, pitting groups of Americans against each other. We're going to keep America safe and strong and respected around the world by doing the right thing and using all the elements of our power. That's what Democrats believe in.

That's what we believe in. That's what we're for. We're not just against something.

As Democrats, by the way, we believe our right to vote should be easier to exercise, not harder. I love folks who say how much they love the Constitution, love the American way, and then do everything they can to make sure that Americans can't vote. Right here in Texas, Republicans have systematically made it harder to register and harder to vote. Four years ago, Texas ranked in the bottom five in voter turnout. Two years ago, it ranked in the bottom three; 16 million eligible voters, 7 million unregistered.

Audience member. Wow!

The President. And that's not an accident. It's on purpose. It's systematically been structured to prevent more folks from voting, discourage more folks from voting.

So I'll tell you what Democrats believe. We believe that despite those efforts, we're going to go ahead and make sure we've got big turnout. We're going to prove everything is bigger in Texas and get more folks registered and get them to the polls. Tell them, don't mess with Texas's right to vote!

That's what we believe in: that everybody should participate, everybody should be involved, everybody has got a voice, everybody has got a say. Our country works better that way. Black, White, Asian, Latino, gay, straight, immigrant, native born. You look around this State, it's home to everybody. People from all kinds of places. That's what makes the Lone Star State great. That's what makes America great.

And that's why I'm proud to be a Democrat, because that's what the Democratic Party looks like. We believe at our core that everybody deserves an equal shot. We fight for people who haven't had the same chances we have, fight for kids who may not have the same opportunities that our kids have, no matter where they are, what they look like, where they come from. We believe they should be able to make it. We look out for somebody else's kids, not just our own, because we know when our kids grow up, then they'll be living in a better world if somebody else's kid has a chance too.

That's what we stand for. That's what we stand for as Democrats. That's what we stand for as Americans. That's what's at stake this year. That's why I'm so proud to have all of you on our team. So let's get to work, Dallas! Let's get to work, Texas! Let's move this country forward! Let's remember what we're for, let's not just be against something. Let's lift up hope! Let's remind ourselves of just how much progress we've made and that when people who love their country decide to come together, nothing can stop them.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 a.m. at Gilley's Dallas. In his remarks, he referred to

former U.S. Trade Representative Ronald Kirk and his wife Matrice Ellis-Kirk; Emmitt J. Smith, former running back, National Football League's Dallas Cowboys; Sen. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate; and Gov. Gregory W. Abbott of Texas. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Dallas

March 12, 2016

Obviously, I want to thank Naomi and Larry, who have just been such dear friends, for their incredible hospitality and the support over all these years. Congratulations to mom and dad. [*Laughter*] I need you to talk to Michelle so she'll put up with me for another third term. [*Laughter*] But what a wonderful story that is. To Peter and Lisa, thank you so much. They, too, have been there from the very beginning, and we are so grateful for their friendship.

I guess you guys call him Ambassador Kirk around here—[*laughter*]—and Theresa—[*inaudible*]. The Kirks, as many of you know, are two of our dearest friends. We're so grateful to them.

I also want to acknowledge Cecile, who has a tough job all the time and does it with grace and good cheer, most of the time. [*Laughter*] And Tom Lopach, the executive director of the DSCC, thank you so much for the good work you guys are doing.

I just gave a long speech, not as long as Ron Kirk's, but it was long. [*Laughter*] His introduction turned out to be a little longer because he remembered what it's like being mayor. [*Laughter*] It feels kind of good. So I'm just going to make some short remarks, building off of what Naomi already said.

This room knows what's at stake. You understand why this is important. I could not be prouder of the work we've done over the last 7½ years. And we've still got a lot more work to do. And we're going to run through the tape. And by the time we are finished, we will be able to say unequivocally that the economy is better than it was when I took office, by a long shot: that more people are working; that millions have health insurance that didn't have it before; that we are finally starting to tackle climate change in a serious way and we're doing so in a way that also creates jobs and economic development all across the country; that we've made progress in revamping our education system. High school graduation rates are all up. College enrollment is up. And we're putting more money into basic research and science. And we've doubled the production of clean energy. We're making huge strides in terms of things like, in the medical field, around precision medicine.

There's work that we're doing overseas that obviously gets a lot of attention: our fight against ISIL and making sure that we're keeping America safe. But we're also helping to mobilize global health and making sure that girls have the chance to learn in every corner of the globe. Lifting up our values and speaking out on behalf of human rights. We've got a long list of stuff we got done.

What we're also aware of, though, is too many people still have a tough time getting a job, finding decent housing, making sure their children are able to give the kind of education that our kids are getting. We know that the ability of women to determine their own health care needs is under assault all across the country, in State legislature after State legislature, because of a concerted national effort that's been organized. We're aware of the fact that economic inequality has continued, even as we have dramatically improved and stabilized the economy. And it's going to require us doing more of what we've done over the last 7½ years, not rolling back the progress that's been made.

And in order to do all this, we've got to have not just have a Democratic President who can continue the legacy that we built together over the last 7½ years, but we've got to have a Senate that is a partner in this process. And I can list a whole bunch of reasons for why that's so important. It turns out that because of the untimely death of Justice Scalia—and obviously, we grieve for his family—but the behavior of the Senate since then, I think, gives you a pretty good reason of why how we think about the Senate is so important.

People ask me oftentimes, what have you learned about being President? And it's a long list of things I've learned. But some have asked me not to do it. [*Laughter*] People have asked me, when did you first decide you wanted to run for President? I said, I know somebody must have dropped me on my head when I was a baby. [*Laughter*]

But a lot of the things that even today, in the midst of this wild political season, the American people continually underestimate is the importance of the power of Congress. Our Founders designed a system of coequal branches. And if we have a Congress that is thoughtful and science based and cares about equal opportunity and equal rights and civil rights and is engaged in broadening prosperity for all people, then we make progress. And when Congress thinks differently, we can still make progress, but it's an awful lot harder.

So I'm going to be working as hard as I can to make sure I've got a Democratic successor. But I'm going to be working just as hard to make sure that we've got a Democratic Senate. And all of you being here today indicates that you think it's pretty important too. And I'm grateful for that.

So we've got great candidates, and you've already probably heard about the terrific opportunities we have to pick up seats in various parts of the country. We've got the right message. It's the right time. There's going to be great organization on the ground, but you're going to have to be supportive. And we have to be just as strategic and hard-working on that front as we are in terms of making sure that we've got a Democrat in the White House as well.

And looking around in this group, though, it makes me feel pretty confident that we're going to get it done. So thank you. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:26 a.m. at the residence of Naomi Aberly and Laurence H. Lebowitz. In his remarks, he referred to Peter A. Kraus, founding partner, Walker, Kraus & Paul, in his capacity as cohost of the event, and his wife Lisa; former U.S. Trade Representative Ronald Kirk and his wife Matrice Ellis-Kirk; and Cecile Richards, president, Planned Parenthood Federation of America. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Department of State's Global Chiefs of Mission Conference
March 14, 2016

Thank you so much. Well, good morning, everybody. I was in the neighborhood—[*laughter*]—so I thought I'd stop by. Actually, you're in the neighborhood. [*Laughter*] So I appreciate you stopping by.

I see a lot of friends and familiar faces. I have visited a lot of the countries where you are serving. I want to thank you once again for putting up with me when I show up, because it's a lot of work. [*Laughter*] I know my visits are not easy. And your teams do extraordinary work in making sure that our visits are a success, and I am deeply grateful for that. And when I depart, I am sure that you guys have big wheels-up parties. [*Laughter*] I'm confident about that.

I'm not here to give a big speech. I wanted to come by and mainly just say thank you. I want to reiterate what I say at every Embassy that I visit to your entire team, and that is that you are doing extraordinary work on behalf of America. And because of you, we are safer and

more secure, and America's reputation around the world is extraordinarily strong.

Now, that starts with our Secretary of State, John Kerry. We all know that John is tireless. We don't know exactly what he takes. [*Laughter*] But 82 foreign trips so far, 80 countries. In one case, five countries in 2 days. More than 1 million miles. After a long day of negotiations in foreign capitals, he's been known to explore the finer restaurants after midnight. One staffer, who I think is more than half his age, says it's inhuman. [*Laughter*] But John is relentless because he knows, as I do, that there is no substitute for American leadership.

There are those who criticize our commitment to diplomacy, for investing so much effort in trying to resolve conflicts that seem intractable. But here's the truth: Conflicts and wars do not end on their own. Breakthroughs do not just happen. Agreements don't write themselves. It takes diplomacy, being willing to sit down with others sometimes with adversaries, sometimes with people whose values are completely contradictory to our own. But as John always says, we have to try.

This Secretary of State from Massachusetts follows on the heels of the original JFK from Massachusetts, who said, "Let's never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate." And we've seen the results, thanks to John, but also, most importantly, thanks to so many of you: the historic democratic transition in Afghanistan, chemical weapons removed from Syria, the Iran nuclear deal, detained Americans coming home, the Paris climate agreement, the cessation of hostilities in the Syrian civil war. That's strong, principled diplomacy at work. And so, John, on behalf of myself and the American people, we want to say thank you for your leadership.

Now, in addition to John, I see Tony and Gayle and Heather, and we get to hang out all the time in the Situation Room. [*Laughter*] Sometimes, we get to come out for fresh air and sunlight. But I know that behind them, there is an incredible team: all of you, our Embassies and posts in every corner of the globe.

And for so many people around the world, both foreign governments and foreign publics, you are the voice and the face of the United States. So you don't just convey our interests, you represent our values, you represent our diversity. You and your teams represent the very best of America.

And I say this before some of you when I've gone to visit—you will hear me say this—when John or I arrive in a country, we make a big fuss. But ultimately, what determines people's impressions of the United States is you and your teams who are there in a sustained way and, day in, day out, are helping people. Whether it's a business trying to get a visa, or it is a family trying to be reunited, you are solving problems, and that has a ripple effect all across the countries where you are serving.

And I know it's not always easy. Dedicated personnel have made, in some cases, the ultimate sacrifice, because the world can be dangerous, including Chris Stevens. And since then, we've lost others: in Afghanistan, Anne Smedinghoff and Abdul Rahman; our Embassy guard in Ankara, Mustafa Akarsu; in Pakistan just this month, two locally employed staff, Faisal Kahn and Abid Shah. So we remember and we honor their service.

There are real risks involved in being a diplomat. There always have been, and many of those risks are accentuated today. And I know that service can mean sacrifice for families, as well. Some of you serve at unaccompanied posts, which means that you are separated from your loved ones. When families deploy, and spouses and children serve in their own way, we know that they don't always hear directly from the President, so I need you to transmit to them how much we appreciate the work that they do. Let them know that we know they're part of the ambassadorial team as well.

More broadly, I want to thank you for your partnership in what's been a priority for us, and that is renewing American leadership. I believe that a broader vision of American strength that harnesses all elements of our national power, including diplomacy, is what is going to make a difference in this complicated age that we live in. That's how we build a global coalition to deal with Iran: strong sanctions

plus diplomacy. And under the nuclear deal, Iran will not get its hands on a nuclear weapon. That's how we forged the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which will help to rewrite the rules of trade in the region and reinforce America's rebalance to the Asia-Pacific. That's how we rallied the world to stop Ebola, deploying our own personnel—military, doctors, USAID, CDC—and helping our West African partners save countless lives. That's how we worked with countries like China and India and nearly 200 nations to reach the Paris Agreement, the most ambitious global agreement ever to fight climate change.

And diplomacy, including having the courage to turn a page on the failed policies of the past, is how we've begun a new chapter of engagement with the people of Cuba. What a historic day it was when John reopened our Embassy in Havana. And next week, I look forward to being the first U.S. President to visit Cuba in nearly 90 years—without a battleship accompanying me. [*Laughter*]

Now, we all know how much work we have to do. As I said, I plan to do everything that I can with every minute that I have left in this office to keep making progress and make the world safer, more prosperous, and to deal with the enormous challenges that so many people are burdened with around the world. We will leave it all on the field. And I'm going to need the help and the partnership of all of you as we focus on some key areas coming up.

First and foremost, we've got to continue to keep our Nation safe, especially from the threat of terrorism. And all of you have a role to play in that process. We're going to have to continue to strengthen our global coalition against ISIL, whether it's the air campaign, support for local partners, cutting off ISIL financing, preventing the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, working with partners to counter ISIL's bankrupt, nihilistic ideology.

We're going to have to keep pushing on the diplomatic front, because that's the only way that the larger Syrian conflict will end, with a political transition and an inclusive Syrian Government.

We're going to have to keep strengthening partnerships from West Africa—as we saw again yesterday in Côte d'Ivoire—to Afghanistan. These countries are battling terrorism; they need our help. And we're going to have to keep working with allies and partners to stabilize Libya and Yemen.

We have to keep living up to our values and move ahead on our plan, including safely transferring detainees, to finally close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay. We are not going to stop making the effort to do that.

So we've got to continue to fight terrorism and do so in a way that's consistent with our values. That's what we've done over these last 7½ years; that's what we're going to continue to do. And all of you have a role to play. And all of you know that in the countries where you are working, it makes a difference when the perception is that America is abiding by its values. It makes your job easier. It makes it easier for us to obtain the cooperation that we need. And I'm very proud of the work that we've done so far. But we've got some more work that we have to do.

Second, we're going to have to keep mobilizing the world to meet shared challenges. And that includes strengthening international rules and norms that undergird peace and security. We're going to have to continue to ensure that Iran fully meets its commitments under the nuclear deal; to make sure that we're enforcing effective sanctions on North Korea; that, at our upcoming summit here in Washington, we're continuing to increase nuclear security.

In Europe, with our NATO allies, we're continuing to bolster our common defenses. We are continuing to push to make sure that the Minsk agreement is upheld and that we are supporting Ukraine's right to self-determination.

On climate change, we have to ensure that nations meet their Paris commitments, that the United States does so as well, and that we invest in new clean energy solutions and help developing countries deal with climate change and ensuring that they do not feel they have to

choose between uplifting their people economically and preserving the planet.

We're going to have to continue to work on transnational threats like cyber attacks, making sure that we've put in place an architecture so that we have international rules governing that space and there's cooperation; preventing epidemics through our global health security agenda; making sure that we are not just reacting to something like the Ebola crisis, but that we are systematically putting in place the kinds of global networks and responses that can help countries not only help their own people, but also make sure that, at a—in an era of international travel and globalization, that our own people are not put in harm's way.

And third, even as we confront threats, we've got to keep partnering with nations and people to seize the incredible opportunities of this moment in history. That means we've got to keep standing up for citizens who are striving to forge their own futures through fair and free elections and open government and insisting on the dignity of all people so that we're respecting human rights around the world.

In the Asia-Pacific, we've got to move ahead with our rebalance, strengthening our alliances, partnering with ASEAN, supporting the transition in Myanmar, moving ahead with TPP, and ensuring security and stability in places like the South China Sea.

Here in the Americas, my trip to Cuba and Argentina will underscore how we're focusing on the future: creating opportunity, growing the region's middle class, helping Colombia achieve peace, and helping Central America reduce violence and poverty.

In Africa, with its enormous economic and human potential, we're going to continue to work with partners to increase trade and investment, lift people out of the middle class—into the middle class, expand access to electricity through Power Africa, and support strong democratic institutions.

Across these regions, we've got to keep forging partnerships that empower young people, entrepreneurs, students through programs like 100,000 Strong in the Americas or the Young Leaders of the Americas or YALI in Africa or YSEALI in Southeast Asia. I will tell you—and I think some of you who have participated in these—when we have these meetings with young people in these regions, they are hungry to learn from the United States and to partner with us. And we have to not only focus on challenges and threats, but opportunities and hope. We have to feed what's best in the world and not just try to address what's worst.

And finally, with American leadership, we can mobilize more nations as we stand up for human dignity and institutionalize some of the gains that we've been made—we've been making in development. Given the urgency of the global refugee crisis, for example, we're going to need you to press governments to step up with resources that are needed to—as we prepare for a refugee summit at the margins of UNGA this fall. We're within reach of the first AIDS-free generation, and we're making major new commitments in our fight to reach another goal, which is a world free of malaria. If we sustain our commitment to food security through Feed the Future and our New Alliance, we can boost farmers' incomes and help lift tens of millions of people from poverty. And with an enduring commitment to our new sustainable development goals, we're going to advance our objective of ending the injustice of extreme poverty, including for women and girls.

So we've got a lot of work to do. And let's see, we've got about 10-plus months to do it. I have to tell you, though, that I'm confident that we can make significant progress over these next 10 months. I think over the last 3½ years, people have been calling me a lame duck, and somehow, we've gotten a lot done. [*Laughter*] And what I always tell my team in the White House, what I tell my Cabinet Secretaries, now what I want to share with all of you is, we have this unique honor of serving our country at these challenging times. And there are some young people here who will continue to serve our country in various capacities in the future. But for many of us, this is the point at which we will have the most impact, have the capacity to do the most good that we may ever have in our lives. What an incredible honor. And what

a incentive for us to make sure that we squeeze every last little bit of good that we can do during these times that we're in these positions.

And the good news is that when we are focused and true to what made us want to do this in the first place, and when we're true to America's best traditions, it's remarkable what we can get done. That's part of the reason why I could not be more optimistic about the future and America's place in the world.

Economically, our businesses have created more than 14 million jobs during the longest consecutive streak of job growth in our history. Our leadership in innovation and technology remains unmatched. Militarily, we are the most powerful nation on Earth by far, with the finest fighting forces the world has ever seen. No other military comes close. Diplomatically, we continue to set the global agenda.

Some of you have participated in international fora, and you know that if the United States isn't right smack dab in the middle of it, if we're not helping to set that agenda, it doesn't happen. People look to us for leadership.

[*At this point, a cell phone rang.*]

Somebody is calling right now—[*laughter*]—to see if we've got the answer to some problem.

And because of the values that you and your teams represent every day, because of our commitment to universal human rights and human development and justice and dignity for every human being, people around the world still look to one nation to lead the way: the United States of America. If there's a problem, they're calling us. If there's an opportunity, they want us to help.

And the reason they do is not just because of the size of our military or the size of our economy, but it's because of our people. Our diplomatic ranks, our staff, our bandwidth, our capacity to focus and bring to bear our best thinking—that's the thing that truly sets us apart. And our ideals. I don't know that there's ever been a country—in fact, I know that there has not been a country—that was the most powerful in the world, but also saw itself as meeting its own self-interest by advancing the interests of others; that was willing to restrain itself in certain situations in order to build up international norms.

I know that in many of the countries where you serve, there are real challenges. And history doesn't always move forward; sometimes, it moves sideways, and sometimes, it moves backwards. We make gains, and then sometimes, we feel losses. And it's typically the bad news that gets reported. But I say this to interns that come in every 6 months and are full of idealism and enthusiasm and are trying to get a sense of how they can channel that and focus that, and sometimes, they're beating back the cynicism that's being fed to them every day. And I tell them: If you had to choose one time in history in which to be born, and you didn't know ahead of time who you were going to be or what nationality, what gender, what race, whether you were wealthy or poor, what moment in history would you choose? You'd choose right now. Because the world has never been healthier or wealthier. Violence has actually ebbed relative to so much of human history. It's never been more tolerant. There's never been more opportunity.

And a lot of that is because of the United States of America. A lot of that is because of you. That's a pretty big deal. That makes the sacrifices worthwhile. I'm very proud of you.

So let's keep it going, and let's finish strong. Let's run through the tape. Tell your families and your teams I appreciate them. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:12 a.m. in the Dean Acheson Auditorium at the Department of State. In his remarks, he referred to Deputy Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken; U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Gayle E. Smith; and Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Heather A. Higginbottom. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks Prior to a Musical Performance by Members of the Cast of "Hamilton"

March 14, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Well, welcome to the White House! It is an understatement to say this was one hot ticket. [*Laughter*] The last time I went to "Hamilton," I didn't even get to see the show. They just let me come on stage and talk after the curtain fell. So, feeling a little deprived—[*laughter*]—we invited the cast to perform today because we wanted to share this incredible musical with folks who might otherwise not get the experience. And I want to thank them so much, the show's producers, for helping to bring "Hamilton" to the White House.

Now, the truth is, though, they do owe me—[*laughter*]—because 7 years ago, Lin-Manuel Miranda came to the White House Poetry Jam, and he took the mike, and he announced that he and his musical collaborator, Alex Lacamoire—[*applause*]—that they were going to perform a song from a hip-hop album they were working on, and I'm quoting him, "about the life of somebody who embodies hip-hop: Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton." [*Laughter*] And so we all started laughing, but Lin-Manuel was serious. And who's laughing now? [*Laughter*]

Having said that, not to take undue credit or anything, but this is definitely "The Room Where It Happened," right here. [*Applause*] This is it right here, on this stage.

Obviously, since that time, "Hamilton" has become a phenomenon, a smash hit. It's taken Broadway by storm, captivating the entire country, winning tons of awards, turned musical haters into diehard fans. [*Laughter*] It has become a favorite in the Obama household.

The First Lady. Woo-hoo!

The President. That was the First Lady hooting. [*Laughter*] Was that Grandma who did it? [*Laughter*]

In fact, "Hamilton," I'm pretty sure, is the only thing that Dick Cheney and I agree on. [*Laughter*]

Now, I'm trying not to get carried away. When my Secretary of Health and Human Services challenged me to a rap battle, I had to draw the line. [*Laughter*] But this show brings unlikely folks together. And, Lin-Manuel, if you have any ideas about a show about Congress, for example—[*laughter*]—now is your chance. We can use the help.

There is a reason why this has become a cultural phenomenon. In Ron Chernow's extraordinary biography of Alexander Hamilton—and a great historian is here on the front row. Lin-Manuel picked up this biography at the airport for some light beach reading. [*Laughter*] But he identified a quintessentially American story. In the character of Hamilton—a striving immigrant who escaped poverty, made his way to the New World, climbed to the top by sheer force of will and pluck and determination—Lin-Manuel saw something of his own family and every immigrant family.

And in the Hamilton that Lin-Manuel and his incredible cast and crew bring to life—a man who is "just like his country, young, scrappy, and hungry"—[*laughter*]—we recognize the improbable story of America and the spirit that has sustained our Nation for over 240 years.

Now, in this telling, rap is the language of revolution. Hip-hop is the backbeat. In each brilliantly crafted song, we hear the debates that shaped our Nation, and we hear the debates that are still shaping our Nation. We feel the fierce, youthful energy that animated the men and women of Hamilton's generation. And with a cast as diverse as America itself, including the outstandingly talented women, the show reminds us that this Nation was built by more than just a few great men and that it is an inheritance that belongs to all of us.

And that's why Michelle and I wanted to bring this performance to the White House. Because "Hamilton" is not just for people who can score a ticket to a pricey Broadway show, it is a story for all of us and about all of us.

And so we are absolutely thrilled that the show's producers have been working with the

New York Public Schools, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Gilder Lehrman Institute to make sure that thousands of low-income students have the chance to see the show. There's now a curriculum to give students context and a deeper meaning—or deeper understanding of our Nation's founding.

Today Michelle hosted a workshop for a group of area high school students with some of the castmembers. I understand these young men—people put on some pretty terrific performances of their own. Look at this brother. He's like, "All right, thank you." [*Laughter*] That's good. I mean, you've got to have confidence. [*Laughter*] What did Malia and Sasha say to me the other day? You've got to be your own number-one fan. [*Laughter*] He's obviously internalized that. [*Laughter*]

We did have one rule, which is, no dueling on the nice furniture, some of which is antique. [*Laughter*]

But the real heroes are the extraordinary educators and counselors and community members who pour their heart into their students and make learning come alive every single day. So I want to give all those educators, counselors, and community members a big round of applause for the support that you've given to our students.

And we hope that this helps every teacher who's spent hours trying to make the "Federalist Papers" teenager-friendly. [*Laughter*] We hope that the remarkable life of Alexander Hamilton will show our young people the possibilities within themselves and how much they can achieve in the span of a lifetime.

And we hope that they'll walk away with an understanding of what our Founders got started, that it was just a start. It was just the beginning. That's what makes America so great. You finish the story. We're not finished. This is a constant work in progress, America. We're boisterous, and we're diverse. We're full of energy and perpetually young in spirit. We are the project that never ends. We make mistakes. We have our foibles. But ultimately, when every voice is heard, we overcome them.

It's not the project of any one person. America is what we make of it. And we only need to look at this cast, performing in front of George and Martha, to know that our Founders could not have dreamt—I think it's fair to say that our Founders couldn't have dreamt up the future that they set in motion. And it's only by exercising their greatest gift to us—the gift of citizenship—that we keep our democracy alive and continue the work of creating that more perfect Union.

So, with that, let's get started. Enjoy the show.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:38 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lin-Manuel Miranda, playwright, composer, and lyricist, Alex Lacamoire, music director and coarranger, and Sander Jacobs, Jill Furman, and Jeffrey Seller, producers, "Hamilton" musical; and former Vice President Richard B. Cheney. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of John B. King, Jr., as Secretary of Education
March 14, 2016

I applaud the Senate for confirming John King as Secretary of Education. In this role, John will continue to lead our efforts to work toward high-quality preschool for all, prepare our kids for college and a career, make college more affordable, and protect Americans from the burdens of student debt. John knows how education can transform a child's future. He's seen it in his own life. And his experience, counsel, and leadership couldn't be more valuable to me and to our country as we work to open the doors of opportunity to all of America's children.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland
March 15, 2016

President Obama. All right, well, top of the morning to you. It is good to welcome back Taoiseach Kenny and the delegation from the Emerald Isle and from Ireland. It is not quite St. Patrick's Day yet, but nevertheless, we always like an excuse to celebrate our Irish heritage and, more importantly, to once again affirm the incredible friendship and partnership that we have with Ireland.

Taoiseach Kenny, when he first came into office, Ireland was in dire straits economically. And we've seen significant progress in the rebound of the Irish economy. Much as here in the United States, we've seen a strong recovery, but we also are aware that a lot more work needs to be done.

There was just an election in Ireland, and we live at a time when there's a lot of volatility in the electoral process. But the one thing that is constant is the importance of us continuing to trade, continuing to encourage investment, and to boost jobs and opportunity in our respective countries.

We also have had an opportunity to discuss some of the larger issues that are impacting the region and the world. Ireland historically has punched above its weight when it comes to humanitarian assistance, dealing with migrants who are displaced because of war, peacekeeping activities around the world. And so we've been very grateful to hear the kinds of work that Ireland is already doing and want to continue to partner with them on that front

We had a chance to discuss the progress that's been made in Northern Ireland with the Fresh Start Agreement, building on the previous agreements that have been made so that we can solidify the peace that is going to be so important for the people of Northern Ireland. And I'm very proud of the work that the United States—most recently through our Envoy, Gary Hart—has done to help partner in that process. And I'll have an opportunity to stop in and discuss some of these issues with the Northern Ireland leaders later today.

And we had a chance to discuss immigration, an issue that is near and dear to the hearts of the Irish people because they understand how important it's been for Irish Americans, and it has given them a sense of compassion and sympathy and understanding about these issues generally. And I indicated to the Taoiseach that we are going to continue to work as hard as we can to find opportunities to make sure that the United States of America continues to be a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. And we very much appreciate his insights in this.

So overall, it's been an outstanding discussion as always. We're going to have an opportunity to go over to the luncheon hosted by Speaker Ryan and, I'm sure, enjoy some good music as well as some good food. And then, this afternoon we'll have a wonderful St. Patrick's Day reception. I'm pretty sure that the fountain is green out there. And Michelle and the girls all appreciate so much the travels they've had in Ireland. We're always glad to reciprocate to the Taoiseach, the delegation, and all our friends from across the Atlantic.

Thank you.

Prime Minister Kenny. Could I thank the President and First Lady and the American Government for the privilege again to be here in the Oval Office to continue the very long tradition of connection with the United States and particularly in relation to St. Patrick's Day?

The President has given you a rundown on the issues that we've discussed here. We had a conversation about the referendum in respect of Britain and its position with the European Union. We favor very strongly Britain remaining a central member. And I think the President was interested in the challenges that Prime Minister Cameron faces both internally and externally, and I've given him an account of the workings of the European Council in bringing about the proposition that Prime Minister Cameron could actually put a referendum to his people.

I also gave the President a briefing on the background to the European Council meeting dealing with migration and the unprecedented challenge that this presents for the—for members of the European Union with particular reference to some countries. And obviously, the next meeting continues on Thursday and Friday of this week, and I'll go back to attend that.

I've thanked President Obama for appointing Gary Hart, who had quite an influence on the workings and proceedings in the lead-in to the Fresh Start Agreement, which is now in operation. We thank the United States again for their continued effort and interest in that. And I referred to the ongoing interest of the Vice President and his work on that as well, and in reference to the—to Ambassador O'Malley, whom President Obama appointed to Ireland.

We also spoke on a number of the other issues that affect us, and I've raised the question of the potential Norwegian Air deal with the President. And we hope that that can be brought to a conclusion sometime in the not-too-distant future.

Other than that, it's been a great privilege to be here again. And I wish you and Michelle and Malia and Sasha the very best for the future. We've had a delightful breakfast hosted by the Vice President this morning. And we're very happy to be back here in America and to continue the connections that go back for several centuries now between our two countries. And we will work with you, and we express the hope that the United States will continue to look at Ireland in a way that cements those foundations that are there for very many years.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:17 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Sen. Gary W. Hart, in his capacity as the Secretary of State's Personal Representative for Northern Ireland; and First Minister Arlene Foster and Deputy First Minister J. Martin P. McGuinness of Northern Ireland.

Remarks at the Congressional Friends of Ireland Luncheon
March 15, 2016

President Obama. Speaker Ryan, Members of Congress, thank you so much for having me here today. Taoiseach and Mrs. Kenny, leaders of Ireland and Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom, honored guests: It is always a privilege to join you for this wonderful St. Patrick's Day celebration.

And with names like Obama, Biden, Ryan, and McConnell, you can rest assured that the old sod's stranglehold on power in Washington is as strong as ever. [*Laughter*]

Now, it's true that it's not technically St. Patrick's Day, but that's okay. Most folks who celebrate it aren't Irish either. [*Laughter*] I can talk about them because I am Irish, as I have been prone to mention on this occasion. [*Laughter*]

Back in 2008, the Corrigan Brothers even penned a song called "There is No One as Irish as Barack Obama." [*Laughter*] This is true. As the lyrics go: "From Kerry to Cork, let's hear it for Barack from old Moneygall." And somehow, that line did not result in cries for my birth certificate on the campaign trail. [*Laughter*]

Now, to paraphrase something President Reagan once said at this lunch, on St. Patrick's Day, you should spend time with saints and scholars. So the Taoiseach and I have two more stops to make after this. [*Laughter*]

But we do enjoy this tradition. And I want to thank Speaker Ryan for continuing it. It's a welcome break from politics as usual, a moment when we all trade in our red and power blue ties for our green ones. I always imagine every Taoiseach leaving this lunch marveling at how cheerful and bipartisan Washington is. [*Laughter*]

And while I may not possess the persuasive power of St. Patrick, I do hope the hospitality extended here today is similarly extended to my nominee to the Supreme Court when he or she arrives. [*Laughter*]

There are two things at least on which Democrats and Republicans in America big heartedly agree. One is that we take seriously our responsibility to be good to Ireland's sons and daughters because so many of us are Ireland's sons and daughters. The other is that we strongly support a peaceful and prosperous Northern Ireland. And America will always remain a partner in that process.

But even if it is an election year, I think the spirit of this day is something worth aspiring to all year round. And, Taoiseach, I hope that you'll forgive me—indulge me for one second as I comment on our domestic politics, just for a moment.

In my State of the Union Address, I remarked that many of you have told me you'd like to see more cooperation and a more elevated debate in Washington, but everyone sometimes feels trapped by their politics. I understand that feeling. I served with many of you in Congress. And so I know that I'm not the only one in this room who may be more than a little dismayed about what's happening on the campaign trail lately. We have heard vulgar and divisive rhetoric aimed at women and minorities, at Americans who don't look like us or pray like us or vote like we do. We've seen misguided attempts to shut down that speech, however offensive it may be. We live in a country where free speech is one of the most important rights that we hold.

In response to those attempts, we've seen actual violence, and we've heard silence from too many of our leaders. Speaker Ryan, I appreciated the words on this topic that you shared with us this morning. But too often, we've accepted this as somehow the new normal.

And it's worth asking ourselves what each of us may have done to contribute to this kind of vicious atmosphere in our politics. I suspect that all of us can recall some intemperate words that we regret. Certainly, I can. And while some may be more to blame than others for the current climate, all of us are responsible for reversing it, for it is a cycle that is not an accurate reflection of America. And it has to stop. And I say that not because it's a matter of political correctness, it's about the way that corrosive behavior can undermine our democracy and our society and even our economy.

In America, there aren't laws that say that we have to be nice to each other or courteous or treat each other with respect. But there are norms. There are customs. There are values that our parents taught us and that we try to teach to our children: to try to treat others the way we want to be treated, the notion that kindness breeds kindness. The longer that we allow the political rhetoric of late to continue, and the longer that we tacitly accept it, we create a permission structure that allows the animosity in one corner of our politics to infect our broader society. And animosity breeds animosity.

And this is also about the American brand. Who are we? How are we perceived around the world? There's a reason that America has always attracted the greatest talent from every corner of the globe. There's a reason that "Made in America" means something. It's because we're creative and dynamic and diverse and inclusive and open. Why would we want to see that brand tarnished? The world pays attention to what we say and what we do.

And this is also about what we are teaching our children. We should not have to explain to them this darker side of politics. We should not be afraid to take them to a political rally or let them watch political debates. We should be teaching them that this democracy is a vibrant and precious thing. And it's going to be theirs someday. And we want them to elevate it.

I had the cast of "Hamilton" at the White House yesterday, who are doing an incredible job getting our young people excited about the possibilities of democracy and the power they have to play a part in it. And these young people drawn from every race and every background from all across the city, you could just see the excitement that they had, the notion that they were somehow connected to the story of a Hamilton or a Washington or a Franklin or a Madison. And so we should be asking ourselves, as those in power with this incredible legacy, whether we are delivering that same message to our children. Are we making them

excited about being citizens of this great country?

So when we leave this lunch, I think we have a choice. We can condone this race to the bottom or accept it as the way things are and sink further. Or we can roundly reject this kind of behavior, whether we see it in the other party or, more importantly, when we see it in our own party and set a better example for our children and the rest of the country to follow. It starts with us.

Speaker Ryan, you and I don't agree on a lot of policy. But I know you are a great father and a great husband, and I know you want what's best for America. And we may fiercely disagree on policy—and the NFC North—[*laughter*]—but I don't have a bad word to say about you as a man. And I would never insult my fellow Irish like that.

The point is, we can have political debates without turning on one another. We can disagree without assuming that it's motivated by malice. There are those here who have fought long and hard to create peace in Northern Ireland and understand what happens when we start going into these dark places, the damage that can be done, and how long it can take to unwind. And so we can treat one another as patriots even if we disagree, as fellow Americans who love this country equally, because it's a place that frees us to have different ideas and different points of view.

So I reject any effort to spread fear or encourage violence or to shut people down when they're trying to speak or turn Americans against one another. And I think as a citizen who will still be leading this office, I will not support somebody who practices that kind of politics. And any leader worthy of our support will remind us that even in a country as big and diverse, as inclusive as ours, what we have in common is far bigger and more important than any of our differences.

That's what carried us through other times that were far more tough and far more dangerous than the one that we're in today, times where we were told to fear the future, times where we were told to turn inward and to turn against each other. And each time, we overcame those fears. Each time, we faced the future with confidence in who we are and what we stand for and the incredible things that we're capable of doing together.

And we do this because we are America. It's a place that sees opportunity where others see peril and that drew so many Irish and other immigrants to our shores. Our unbending belief that we make our own destiny and our unshakable dream that if we work hard and live up to our responsibilities and if we look out for one another, then there is a better day lying right around the bend.

That dream has always come true in America. It is what provided hope and comfort and opportunity for so many that traveled across the Atlantic. It always will, so long as we nurture it.

Happy St. Patrick's Day, everybody. Let me make a toast. To Taoiseach, to Speaker Ryan, to all the leaders who are gathered here, thank you. May God bless you, and may He continue to bless this great country that we love.

[*At this point, President Obama offered a toast.*]

Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul D. Ryan. Thank you, Mr. President. And now it is my honor to introduce His Excellency, Enda Kenny, Taoiseach of Ireland.

Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland. Thank you. Thank you, please sit. Mr. Speaker; Mr. President; Mr. Vice President; Members of Congress; friends of Ireland; distinguished guests: Fionnuala and I would like to thank you again for the honor and the privilege of being here in this historic room at this historic time. Thank you for the profundity of your words, Mr. President.

Let me say that it's—I think you two people should know that Moneygall is not that far from Graiguenamanagh. [*Laughter*] We have had before—we've had meetings before in houses at the halfway point, and people would always shake hands and say, we agree. And with respect to the President's comments, which reminds me of what President Kennedy said, that this is a time of leadership, not showmanship.

So maybe we might get together somewhere between Graiguenamanagh and Moneygall, if time was appropriate. [*Laughter*] Have a little get-together and say, well, we'll sort it out. [*Laughter*]

I'd like to say that it's a pleasure to be back with so many of you just before the Cherry Blossom Festival and the actual day of St. Patrick's Day. The presence of so many of you here in this room speaks for itself for the continuity of what was begun so many years ago.

Let me congratulate you, Paul, on your appointment as Speaker of the House. This is a really challenging position in a challenging time, politically, both here and internationally. And the world has always looked to America to lead. And it's not good when we find a situation where that doesn't apply. So you, with your experience and your longstanding friendship with Ireland, is something that we can be very proud of, in taking on a really challenging role in the American politics, but also with profound effects internationally. I wish you the very best of luck in that.

And might I say that obviously the relationship between our two countries is as vibrant and as strong as ever? The line of investment both ways is unprecedented. Irish companies now employ 100,000 people across 50 States in the United States. And that's very different from the situation that applied for a century and a half, where the migration was one way, and emigration from the country meant that the parcel from America and the remittances back to Ireland kept people alive, essentially, until such time as we have come to a point where we can employ and contribute to the great American society and the greater commerce of the world. Obviously, our trading links are such that we want to develop that in the time ahead.

Clearly, the base in Ireland of a thousand multinationals, with many of them from the United States, have given an opportunity for young Irish people to give vent to their imaginative qualities of creativity and ingenuity of being able to meet the bar, however high the challenge is. And we're very proud of that association, and it's having an impact on our young people with their opportunity to give of their best.

When Brian McMahon was a teacher in Listowel, he used to say that the person in front of the class actually has a challenge, and that is to find the gift or the flower that every person has got. How do you find it? How do you appreciate it? How do you nurture it? And given the state of communications and volume of material that's currently available for every student, teachers have become directors and counselors and finders and appreciate where the talent and the flare lies that will meet the challenge of the time ahead.

I'd like to thank you, Speaker and Mr. President, for your support for Northern Ireland. Gary Hart did a fabulous job over there recently in terms of his influence in putting together the conditions that applied for the Fresh Start to become a fact. And I'm glad to see Peter King and Richard Neal and the other Friends of Ireland who have also contributed to that. I know you're going over later for the—for some commemorative celebrations.

I also recognize the Secretary of State and the Deputy First Minister—is Arlene here? Arlene? First Minister Arlene Foster, Deputy First Minister. Martin McGuinness and I recognize the leader of the Sinn Fein party here, Gerry Adams, as well.

Clearly, this is a situation that is one that is so precious to us and so near to us that it means that we've got to mind a fragile peace very carefully.

I was saddened this morning, I have to say, to learn of the death of Adrian Ismay, who was an officer of the Northern Ireland prison service. And on your behalf, I'd like to express our sympathy to his wife at this dreadful time. He died after having been discharged from hospital after a bomb was placed under his vehicle on Friday, the 4th of March. Let's just say that this was a callous and cowardly attack on the entire community. And that's why, in the words of the President, it is really important that we focus on peace continuity and reject those who wish to return to days of violence and the dark days when these attacks were commonplace. That agenda will not succeed.

And we best honor his memory by redoubling our efforts to build a truly peaceful future for all the people of Northern Ireland, which I'm sure as you will wish also.

George Mitchell, in his time, made a remarkable impact on—as an Irish American with a real interest in seeing that peace was put together. And I'm glad to see that he's the grand marshal of the New York parade this year. And that's a recognition of the wonderful part that he played over those years.

As you know, John Boehner, Paul, did all of this stuff here for the last number of years, and he used to say before he'd—when he'd speak, "Well, I'm going to get rolled again about immigration today, might I, so I'm as well to have mentioned it now." [*Laughter*] So that has now passed on to your desk—[*laughter*]—and will be a matter for the next administration. So look out. I commend President Obama for what he did in terms of the executive authority that he has. Obviously, there are matters of court there.

But this is an issue for us, Paul, as you're well aware. And as an Irish American with strong roots in Graiguenamanagh, what we're going to do is get all of those who have emigrated from that 20-mile radius of Graiguenamanagh and send them down here to you so that you will see them. [*Laughter*] And we want them to be documented, and we want them to be able to play their part for the country, of their—where they now live as law-abiding citizens, and we want them to be able to participate fully in American society.

Obviously, it's a situation that I've often referred to, in the words of the American national anthem—"the land of the free and the home of the brave"—and that's where they want to be able to contribute. And because of, I suppose, politics at the end of the day on the broader scale, not just the Irish, this is an issue that needs to be dealt with.

We have similar problems now with migration on a vast scale coming into Europe. This is causing political challenges for many countries. And as I say, it's a case of leadership at the end of the day, being able to bring about a result here.

So you know yourselves the contribution that has been made by Irish over the centuries to the United States. And the success of the recent film, "Brooklyn," based on the novel by Colm Toibin, shows how strongly the immigrant experience continues to resonate with a modern audience. This year there were nine nominations for Oscars from Ireland, which speaks, if you like, of the continued creativity that our young people have.

So as a small Irish nation, obviously, those who have traveled and those who are here in the United States want to be part of the greater community in full legitimacy, whether it be Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Toronto, or wherever—they come to America, they like to do that. Other countries—Australia, Britain, and Europe—in the same way.

This year, as you know, marks the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Rising, which was a seminal moment in the history of Ireland, which set the country on a path which ultimately led to economic and political independence. This could not have happened without the support of the United States of America. The proclamation, which was read by Padraic Pearse outside the steps of the General Post Office on Easter Monday 20—1916, speaks specifically of the support of our, as he called it, our exiled children in America. Those exiled children, many of them—their descendants are here in this room—provided the crucial support to ensure that Irish independence, for so long a dream, finally became a reality.

Now, I want you to understand that we want this to be a very inclusive, comprehensive, sensitive experience for everybody. And in that sense, the program that has been put out has been couched in that manner, to take into account the contribution or the involvement of everybody, irrespective of their religion, of their creed, of their politics, of where they came from. So, in that sense, the commemorative centenary events are for everybody, for the entire country.

So I'm especially pleased to learn about the commemorative events planned for here in the Congress, Paul. And I know that at the

Kennedy Center in May, there's a 3-week opportunity to learn the poetry of Ireland, the songs of Ireland, the music of Ireland. If you want to participate, you'd be more than welcome.

I also understand that here in the U.S., there will be the Ireland 100; it's a 3-week festival of Irish arts and culture, which takes place, as I say, over that period.

Let me just say, finally, that I know that—I think on the grounds of the Capitol Building here, there will be the planting of an oak tree. Whether you plant it, or whoever plants it, it's a privilege that it should grow here. And it's an Irish oak. And my hope would be that as we start the journey of the second hundred years, that when that tree is a hundred years old, and it stands proudly here in the vicinity of the Capitol Building, that it has grown tall and straight into the light, and that it represents our country and the pride that we feel in being here in America, in this building, which was partially constructed under the engineering ingenuity of James Hoban, who designed the White House—so when you're relaxed on there, Mr. President, it's an Irish architect who designed that for you. [*Laughter*] But I do hope that that tree represents a symbol of continuity and that it reflects the best of what it is: of truth and courage and our common humanity.

And that's where we need to be. And that's where politics can bring us. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:06 p.m. in the Rayburn Room at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Fionnuala Kenny, wife of Prime Minister Kenny; Vice President Joe Biden; and Senate Majority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell. Prime Minister Kenny referred to former Sen. Gary W. Hart, in his capacity as the U.S. Secretary of State's Personal Representative for Northern Ireland; Reps. Peter T. King and Richard E. Neal, in their capacity as cochairs of the Congressional Friends of Ireland Caucus; the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Theresa Villiers; First Minister Arlene Foster and Deputy First Minister J. Martin P. McGuinness of Northern Ireland; Sharon Ismay, wife of Adrian Ismay, a Northern Ireland prison officer who was injured in a bombing in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on March 4, and subsequently died from his injuries on March 15; former Sen. George J. Mitchell, in his former capacity as U.S. Special Envoy to Northern Ireland; and former Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner.

Remarks at a St. Patrick's Day Reception
March 15, 2016

Vice President Joe Biden. Hello, folks! Welcome to the White House. How are you? Good to see you; it's a beautiful dress. Folks, my name is Joe Biden. I work for Barack Obama. And I have the great honor of introducing our next three guests.

In 1963, President Kennedy addressed the Irish Parliament and said, and I quote, "Our two nations, divided by distance, have been united by history." Today we celebrate that shared heritage that has defined so many of us and—as individuals, and it's defined our country as well.

And it's clear why this day is so important to many of you and to me and the President, who have ancestors who are from Ireland, who left behind everything to find a new home and find a place in that Promised Land, America. In the face of oppression, they held strong, strong, strong beliefs. They planted deep roots, and they looked to the future. It's the immigrant story of all who came here.

And the truth is that the greatest contribution the Irish brought to this country is a set of values: hard work, family, a sense of community, pride, faith, and idealism. My mother had an expression—and I mean this sincerely—she talked about, being Irish was about family, faith, but most of all, it was about courage. She said, because without courage, you cannot love

with abandon. And to be Irish is to be able to love with abandon, to be able to dream.

Oscar Wilde said: "Yes, I'm a dreamer, for a dreamer is one who can only find his way by moonlight. And his punishment is that he sees the dawn before the rest of the world." Millions—millions—of Irish men and women look to that dawn, and they forge their dreams into the foundation stones that literally formed this great nation of ours, all believing in something that defines America in a single word. The uniqueness of this country, in my view, can be summed up in one word. We're all about possibilities. Anything—anything—is possible.

That's who we are as Americans. In my view, that's the Irish of it. I've felt it. My family has felt it. All of you have felt it. And the three people I'm about to introduce, they have felt it, as well. Ladies and gentlemen, my friend, the President of the United States, Barack Obama, the Taoiseach of Ireland, Enda Kenny, and his wife Fionnuala.

President Obama. Well, welcome to the White House, everybody. Happy St. Patrick's Week. [*Laughter*] Once again, today is not technically St. Paddy's Day. And once again, this does not seem to bother any of you one bit. [*Laughter*] But if you are lucky enough to be Irish, you're lucky enough.

This, of course, is one of my favorite events. I get to welcome my people. [*Laughter*] And the Obamas of Leinster are nothing if not welcoming. We've got "trad." We've got pints of black. It's up to you to provide the *craic*. [*Laughter*]

This is my 8th St. Patrick's Day as President, and this is my 25th set of St. Patrick's Day remarks as President. This is true.

Vice President Biden. Not nearly enough. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. When you include the speeches I've given in Dublin and Northern Ireland, we are pushing 30. But fortunately, the Irish are not short on inspiration.

Everybody here is Irish; I am positive of it. There's some particularly "indomitable Irishry" in the house. But we are thrilled to once again host Taoiseach Enda Kenny. Give him a big round of applause. His wife Fionnuala—give her a bigger round of applause. And we are in the presence of one of America's great Irish American heroes, Vice President Joe Biden. [*Applause*] Hey!

Blessed are the peacemakers, and from Northern Ireland, we welcome their first female First Minister, Arlene Foster, and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness. The U.K.'s Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Theresa Villiers, is here. Give her a big round of applause. And Irish Foreign Minister Charlie Flanagan. They've done a great job of representing their governments in the negotiations that led to the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements, so we're very proud of them.

And former Secretary Gary—former Senator Gary Hart, as Secretary Kerry's Personal Representative, has done an extraordinary job representing America, along with our Consul General in Belfast, Dan Lawton. So thank all of you.

In addition, our Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Matthew Barzun, is here, as is our Ambassador to Ireland, Kevin O'Malley. Hey! As you can see and hear, although Kevin has only been in Ireland for 18 months, he has crammed in almost 8 years of work. [*Laughter*] One of his legacies will be his "Creative Minds" initiative, in which he's been busy connecting the next generation of Irish and American leaders who will be singing in this room someday. So thank you, Kevin. Your Mayo grandparents would be proud.

And one of the warmest women you'll ever meet is Ireland's Ambassador to the United States, Anne Anderson. I'm going to embarrass Anne for a second. A few days ago, she became the first woman ever admitted into the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick. And to underscore what a big deal this is, only one other person ever has been "adopted" into that society. This is true: It was this guy right here, George Washington. So you are keeping good company, Anne. Congratulations. [*Laughter*]

Our Ambassador to Japan, Caroline Kennedy, is also here. And she may have made the longest trip. And although Caroline never likes to draw attention to herself, she's out here somewhere. And obviously, Caroline's family

will forever represent the centrality of Irish heritage to our American story.

There's a whole brood of Irish American Members of Congress here as well, including, from Caroline's family, Joe Kennedy, who's a new father to a baby girl. If—that's worth congratulating. You can't beat daughters. If anyone is in need of a good song, Joe Crowley has one of the finer singing voices in Washington. [*Laughter*] But, Joe, please wait until I'm done speaking. [*Laughter*]

Now, some of you may have seen a front page of the Galway City Tribune last summer that blared, in huge print: "He's on His Way! Hopes That Obama Will Make Paddy's Day Speech in Eyre Square." I don't know how this rumor got started. It might have been somebody on my staff who just wanted another trip to Ireland. [*Laughter*] But I do have joyous memories of my own trips to the Emerald Isle. And Ireland really is, as Seamus Heaney described it, a place that can "catch the heart off guard and blow it open." Most of all, I remember how the Irish people made me feel so at home, like my cousin Henry and his pubkeeper, Ollie, who are here again today.

Audience member. Hey!

President Obama. There you go! They're around here somewhere.

So I now understand what President Kennedy meant when he said that once he couldn't run again, he'd endorse the Democratic candidate who would promise to appoint him Ambassador to Ireland. [*Laughter*] I would like to point out, I have not yet endorsed. [*Laughter*] A certain commitment, quietly made, would not hurt. [*Laughter*]

Of course, for the Irish, home is everywhere. And perhaps no other country in the world is more "everywhere" than the United States. We are braided together in so many ways, America and Ireland. We've been for centuries, through history and bloodline. We've waged war side by side. We've waged peace side by side. We are family and we are friends.

This year marks the hundredth anniversary of the 1916 Proclamation. And I'm struck with how ahead of its time the proclamation was. It was a daring document, one which its authors were very particular to address to "Irishmen and Irishwomen." It's built around "religious and civil liberty, equal rights, and equal opportunities" and "cherishing all the children of the nation equally."

Cherishing all the children of the world—of the nation equally. That's a vision statement a hundred years ago, and it would be a visionary statement today. It's a universal value, like the ones in America's own founding documents, that compels us to continually look forward; that gives us the chance to change; that dares us, American and Irish alike, to keep toiling towards our better selves.

Cherishing all the children of the nation equally means striving to make sure they grow up with equal rights and equal opportunities. And I should point out that Ireland, last year, legalized marriage equality, and a month later, America was proud to join you. This year, New York's St. Patrick's Day parade is allowing Irish LGBT groups to march for the very first time. As Ambassador Anderson has said, "Irish America is making a statement: There are no second-class citizens, no children of a lesser God."

Cherishing all the children of the nation equally means making our immigration system smarter and fairer and more just. I think of something powerful that the Taoiseach said here a few years ago about people "waiting to be herded into ships; mothers soothing children, perhaps not even their own; husbands calling for wives, and wives calling for husbands—two peoples who would cross that single dividing ocean, the Irish to freedom; the Africans to slavery."

Now, my own daughters have the blood of both peoples, Irish and Africans, running through their veins. And that makes them something more powerful: It makes them Americans. All of us came from someplace else. America is made of generations of men and women who crossed oceans and borders to come here, some in extraordinarily dire circumstances. Tireless waves of immigrants: from Ireland, yes, but also Italy and Germany, from Russia and China, Southeast Asia, from

Latin America and Africa. And many set down roots and became some of our most influential citizens.

We encourage the latest generation of eligible immigrants—some 8.8 million permanent residents, including many Irish—to take the same step in their American journey. Many are students who, except for the circumstances of their birth, are as American as my own daughters, as Joe's children and grandchildren, students who bravely came out as undocumented in the hopes that they could earn the right to become citizens and make a difference in the country that they love.

Our neighbors, our classmates, our friends—they did not come here in search of a free ride. They came to work and to study and to serve in our military and, above all, to contribute to our success. That is the American Dream. And the American Dream is something that no wall will ever contain.

Cherishing all the children of the nation equally means nurturing a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. Eighteen years of peace means a whole generation has grown up living the dreams of their parents and grandparents: to travel without the burden of checkpoints or roadblocks or soldiers on patrol, to enjoy a sunny day free from the ever-present awareness that violence could blacken it at any moment, to befriend or fall in love with whomever they want. And while so many of you in this room negotiated the terms of peace, the fate is—of peace is up to our young people. After all, 18 years of peace means that peace can vote now. [*Laughter*] So we have to keep setting an example, through our words and our actions, that peace is a path worth pursuing.

The Irish author, Colum McCann, who America now claims as our own, I understand is here today. Where are you, Colum? He's an excellent writer. He may be——

Vice President Biden. All the way in the back.

President Obama. ——he's all the way in the back. I love his books. He once wrote, "Peace"—there he is right there. Colum once wrote: "Peace is indeed harder than war, and its constant fragility is part of its beauty. A bullet need happen only once, but for peace to work, we need to be reminded of its existence again and again and again."

That's what so many of you have worked to do, again and again and again. And the world has noticed. As I said in Belfast, hope is contagious. And you've designed a hopeful blueprint for others to follow. You're proof of what's possible. I'm very proud that my administration has played a part in helping you to make hope one of your greatest exports.

So, in closing, on the occasion of my final St. Patrick's Day with all of you——

Audience members. No!

President Obama. Well, I mean, we may meet in a pub in Dublin or something.

Audience members. Yes!

President Obama. I'm saying, in the White House. [*Laughter*] And my 30th set of remarks for an Irish audience, I'd like to close with a poem from an Irishwoman, Eavan Boland, that she wrote about a 30th anniversary:

> this is the day to think of it, to wonder:
> all those years, all those years together—
> the stars in a frozen arc overhead,
> the quick noise of a thaw in the air,
> the blue stare of the hills—through it all
> this constancy: what wears, what endures.

So, to the constancy of our enduring friendship. May Ireland and America forever cherish and brilliantly sustain all our sons and daughters equally.

Happy St. Paddy's Day, everybody. Goodnight and be with—may joy be with all of you.

Let me now introduce our honored guest, Taoiseach Kenny. Please come to the stage.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland spoke briefly in Gaelic, and no translation was provided. He then spoke in English as follows.*]

Prime Minister Kenny. Thank you, and you're all welcome. Now, Mr. President; Mr. Vice President; Mr. Flanagan; First and Deputy First Minister; Ambassadors; ladies and gentlemen: When I was outside, I said to the President, it's not often you get the chance of speaking with the President of the United

States, the Vice President of the United States, and my wife. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. There she is.

Prime Minister Kenny. And so I said, the election is over in Ireland. There are a few things I want to say about it. So I'm going to speak for 2 hours. [*Laughter*] That was just a fleeting thought. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, Mr. President. It gives Fionnuala and myself, on behalf of the people of Ireland, the greatest of pleasure to mark St. Patrick's Day, week, time with you, a special time for the Irish family worldwide.

And let me again thank you, President, for all the times you've been here, for the warmth of your hospitality, the generosity of your time, and the continued interest that you and your administration have shown for Ireland and Northern Ireland. Gary Hart, George Mitchell, Joe Biden, Kevin O'Malley, everybody—thank you.

Might I say—and actually, the bowl of shamrock is more important than it looks because it's a symbol. It's a link. It's a symbolic link, a symbolic claim going back these many St. Patrick's Days.

Now, you all know what happened. A teenager was taken away from his home. He was transported to Ireland. He was put into slavery, to mind sheep on a hillside. He was a shepherd, yes, but he was also a slave. And those who made him a slave had no idea that in time and in the process, they were also making him the saint and symbol of a nation.

Similarly, years later, having returned to the scene of his slavery, he picked up a little three-piece piece of greenery just to illustrate an idea. You will understand that this was in the days before PowerPoint displays and so on. [*Laughter*] And to St. Patrick, the shamrock was just a handy little piece of greenery, just a prop. No more than that. And that tiny piece of greenery became the quintessence, the instantly recognizable brand of a modern nation. And more, here in this White House, designed by James Hoban, from Dublin, it has become a yearly reminder of the ties that bind our two nations. And the ties that bind America and Ireland are ties of blood and kinship, ties of trade and tradition, ties of hopes and dreams.

Mr. President, I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to you for your outstanding leadership over the last 7 years, to thank you for all you've done for Irish-U.S. relationships in that time. [*Applause*] See?

Sir, Mr. President, you came into office at the most challenging times in terms of the global economic situation. And I believe that your steadfast and courageous leadership played a huge role in ensuring that the global recession did not become a global depression.

Leadership requires courage. Ultimately, that's what politics is about, the triumph of hope over hate. Because when hate is deployed, it doesn't just diminish those who deploy it, it diminishes all of us. Whereas hope, hope is that golden currency that never devalues, that never tarnishes. And it's hope, and not hatred, was what animated the dreamers and the patriots in the 1916 rebellion in Dublin. Hope, not hatred, was what animated great Presidents, like Lincoln, to turn enemies into friends.

Very many of the Irish found hope in America. They found opportunity. They found challenge. And they found a society that valued hard work and that valued contribution. They became police officers and nurses, firefighters, domestic servants, dockers, coal miners, railroaders, and so on. They built bridges and railways and docks and skyscrapers.

And during my time as Taoiseach, we've reached out to the Irish diaspora as never before to have seen more of those descendants of those who left coming back to experience a new Ireland, where, in the words of Seamus Heaney, hope and history rhyme.

So, although a small country, we've always been committed to making a big difference in the world. We know that any contribution that we can make to tackling global problems such as terrorism, hunger, climate change can only be achieved through strong global partnership. And I want to applaud, publicly, President Obama's tireless efforts on the world's stage in promoting dialogue, common sense, and part-

nership in the pursuit of peace and a sustainable future for humanity.

Ask any of the 35 million Americans who now have the hope and the realization of health assistance in their time of need, and they can answer, Barack Obama delivered that for me.

In conclusion, let me again mention 1916. As many of you know, the United States is the only country that was specifically mentioned in the 1916 Proclamation. And the signatories recognized, as they said, the support of our exiled children in America, a reference to the many millions of our people in this country who supported the cause of Irish freedom for generations. The inscription is on the bowl: Our exiled children in America.

Let me just conclude on this. What St. Patrick did, whether he realized it or not, was actually the quintessence of great leadership, or should I say, in the words of one more eloquent and more famous than I, "the audacity of hope"—[*laughter*]—and the determination to leave the world better than he found it, just like President Barack Obama.

And so now it is my pleasure and my privilege on behalf of the people of our country and the 70 million Irish people all over the world, to present this bowl of shamrock, tried and tested, to President of the United States Barack Obama.

Thank you all very much. Hope you have a wonderful evening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:59 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Eleanor Kennedy, daughter of Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy III; Rep. Joseph Crowley; Ollie Hayes, owner of the Ollie Hayes Bar in Moneygall, Ireland; and R. Hunter and Ashley B. Biden, children, and R. Hunter Biden, Jr., and Natalie, Finnegan, Naomi, and Roberta "Maisy" Biden, grandchildren, of Vice President Biden. He also referred to his cousin Henry Healy. Prime Minister Kenny referred to former Sen. George J. Mitchell, in his former capacity as U.S. Special Envoy to Northern Ireland.

Statement on the Selection of a Nominee for United States Supreme Court Associate Justice

March 16, 2016

Today, I will announce the person whom I believe is eminently qualified to sit on the Supreme Court.

As President, it is both my constitutional duty to nominate a Justice and one of the most important decisions that I—or any president—will make.

I've devoted a considerable amount of time and deliberation to this decision. I've consulted with legal experts and people across the political spectrum, both inside and outside government. And we've reached out to every member of the Senate, who each have a responsibility to do their job and take this nomination just as seriously.

Please join me in the Rose Garden at 11:00 am Eastern for my announcement.

This is a responsibility I do not take lightly. In considering several candidates, I held each to three principles that reflect the role the Supreme Court plays in our democracy.

First, a Justice should possess an independent mind, unimpeachable credentials, and an unquestionable mastery of law. There is no doubt this person will face complex legal questions, so it is imperative that he or she possess a rigorous intellect that will help provide clear answers.

Second, a Justice should recognize the limits of the judiciary's role. With a commitment to impartial justice rather than any particular ideology, the next Supreme Court Justice will understand that the job is to interpret the law, not make law.

However, I know there will be cases before the Supreme Court in which the law is not clear. In those cases, a Justice's analysis will

necessarily be shaped by his or her own perspective, ethics, and judgment.

Therefore, the third quality I looked for in a judge is a keen understanding that justice is not about abstract legal theory, nor some footnote in a dusty casebook. It's the kind of life experience earned outside the classroom and the courtroom; experience that suggests he or she views the law not only as an intellectual exercise, but also grasps the way it affects the daily reality of people's lives in a big, complicated democracy, and in rapidly-changing times. In my view, that's an essential element for arriving at just decisions and fair outcomes.

Today at 11:00 am Eastern, I'll introduce you to the judge I believe meets all three of these standards.

I'm confident you'll share my conviction that this American is not only eminently qualified to be a Supreme Court Justice, but deserves a fair hearing, and an up-or-down vote.

In putting forward a nominee today, I am fulfilling my constitutional duty. I'm doing my job. I hope that our Senators will do their jobs, and move quickly to consider my nominee. That is what the Constitution dictates, and that's what the American people expect and deserve from their leaders.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

P.S. If you're looking for the latest on my Supreme Court nominee and the confirmation process in the Senate, *check out @SCOTUSnom on Twitter*. You'll find all the facts and up-to-date information there.

NOTE: This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as an e-mail message from the President.

Remarks on the Nomination of Merrick B. Garland To Be a United States Supreme Court Associate Justice
March 16, 2016

The President. Good morning. Everybody, please have a seat.

Of the many powers and responsibilities that the Constitution vests in the Presidency, few are more consequential than appointing a Supreme Court Justice, particularly one to succeed Justice Scalia, one of the most influential jurists of our time.

The men and women who sit on the Supreme Court are the final arbiters of American law. They safeguard our rights. They ensure that our system is one of laws and not men. They're charged with the essential task of applying principles put to paper more than two centuries ago to some of the most challenging questions of our time.

So this is not a responsibility that I take lightly. It's a decision that requires me to set aside short-term expediency and narrow politics so as to maintain faith with our Founders and, perhaps more importantly, with future generations. That's why, over the past several weeks, I've done my best to set up a rigorous and comprehensive process. I've sought the advice of Republican and Democratic Members of Congress. We've reached out to every member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, to constitutional scholars, to advocacy groups, to bar associations, representing an array of interests and opinions from all across the spectrum.

And today, after completing this exhaustive process, I've made my decision. I've selected a nominee who is widely recognized not only as one of America's sharpest legal minds, but someone who brings to his work a spirit of decency, modesty, integrity, even-handedness, and excellence. These qualities, and his long commitment to public service, have earned him the respect and admiration of leaders from both sides of the aisle. He will ultimately bring that same character to bear on the Supreme Court, an institution in which he is uniquely prepared to serve immediately.

Today I am nominating Chief Judge Merrick Brian Garland to join the Supreme Court.

Now, in law enforcement circles and in the legal community at large, Judge Garland needs no introduction. But I'd like to take a minute to introduce Merrick to the American people, whom he already so ably serves.

He was born and raised in the Land of Lincoln, in my hometown of Chicago, in my home State of Illinois. His mother volunteered in the community; his father ran a small business out of their home. Inheriting that work ethic, Merrick became valedictorian of his public high school. He earned a scholarship to Harvard, where he graduated summa cum laude. And he put himself through Harvard Law School by working as a tutor, by stocking shoes in a shoe store, and, in what is always a painful moment for any young man, by selling his comic book collection. [*Laughter*] It's tough. Been there. [*Laughter*]

Merrick graduated magna cum laude from Harvard Law, and the early years of his legal career bear all the traditional marks of excellence. He clerked for two of President Eisenhower's judicial appointees: first for a legendary judge on the Second Circuit, Judge Henry Friendly, and then for Supreme Court Justice William Brennan. Following his clerkships, Merrick joined a highly regarded law firm, with a practice focused on litigation and pro bono representation of disadvantaged Americans. Within 4 years, he earned a partnership, the dream of most lawyers. But in 1989, just months after that achievement, Merrick made a highly unusual career decision. He walked away from a comfortable and lucrative law practice to return to public service.

Merrick accepted a low-level job as a Federal prosecutor in President George H.W. Bush's administration, took a 50-percent pay cut, traded in his elegant partner's office for a windowless closet that smelled of stale cigarette smoke. This was a time when crime here in Washington had reached epidemic proportions, and he wanted to help. And he quickly made a name for himself, going after corrupt politicians and violent criminals.

His sterling record as a prosecutor led him to the Justice Department, where he oversaw some of the most significant prosecutions in the 1990s, including overseeing every aspect of the Federal response to the Oklahoma City bombing. In the aftermath of that act of terror, when 168 people, many of them small children, were murdered, Merrick had one evening to say goodbye to his own young daughters before he boarded a plane to Oklahoma City. And he would remain there for weeks. He worked side by side with first responders, rescue workers, local and Federal law enforcement. He led the investigation and supervised the prosecution that brought Timothy McVeigh to justice.

But perhaps most important is the way he did it. Throughout the process, Merrick took pains to do everything by the book. When people offered to turn over evidence voluntarily, he refused, taking the harder route of obtaining the proper subpoenas instead, because Merrick would take no chances that someone who murdered innocent Americans might go free on a technicality.

Merrick also made a concerted effort to reach out to the victims and their families, updating them frequently on the case's progress. Everywhere he went, he carried with him in his briefcase the program from the memorial service with each of the victims' names inside, a constant, searing reminder of why he had to succeed.

Judge Garland has often referred to his work on the Oklahoma City case as, and I quote, "the most important thing I have ever done in my life." And through it all, he never lost touch with that community that he served.

It's no surprise then, that soon after his work in Oklahoma City, Merrick was nominated to what's often called the second highest court in the land, the DC Circuit Court. During that process, during that confirmation process, he earned overwhelming bipartisan praise from Senators and legal experts alike. Republican Senator Orrin Hatch, who was then chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, supported his nomination. Back then, he said, "In all honesty, I would like to see one person come to this floor and say one reason why Merrick Garland does not deserve this position." He actually accused fellow Senate Republicans trying to obstruct Merrick's confirmation of "playing

politics with judges." And he has since said that Judge Garland would be a "consensus nominee" for the Supreme Court who "would be very well supported by all sides," and there would be "no question" Merrick would be confirmed with bipartisan support.

Now, ultimately, Merrick was confirmed to the DC Circuit, the second highest court in the land, with votes from a majority of Democrats and a majority of Republicans. Three years ago, he was elevated to Chief Judge. And in his 19 years on the DC Circuit, Judge Garland has brought his trademark diligence, compassion, and unwavering regard for the rule of law to his work.

On a Circuit Court known for strong-minded judges on both ends of the spectrum, Judge Garland has earned a track record of building consensus as a thoughtful, fairminded judge who follows the law. He's shown a rare ability to bring together odd couples, assemble unlikely coalitions, persuade colleagues with wide-ranging judicial philosophies to sign on to his opinions.

And this record on the bench speaks, I believe, to Judge Garland's fundamental temperament: his insistence that all views deserve a respectful hearing; his habit, to borrow a phrase from former Justice John Paul Stevens, "of understanding before disagreeing" and then disagreeing without being disagreeable. It speaks to his ability to persuade, to respond to the concerns of others with sound arguments and airtight logic. As his former colleague on the DC Circuit and our current Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, John Roberts, once said, "Any time Judge Garland disagrees, you know you're in a difficult area."

At the same time, Chief Judge Garland is more than just a brilliant legal mind. He's someone who has a keen understanding that justice is about more than abstract legal theory; more than some footnote in a dusty casebook. His life experience—his experience in places like Oklahoma City—informs his view that the law is more than an intellectual exercise. He understands the way law affects the daily reality of people's lives in a big, complicated democracy and in rapidly changing times. And throughout his jurisprudence runs a common thread: a dedication to protecting the basic rights of every American; a conviction that in a democracy, powerful voices must not be allowed to drown out the voices of everyday Americans.

To find someone with such a long career of public service, marked by complex and sensitive issues, to find someone who just about everyone not only respects, but genuinely likes, that is rare. And it speaks to who Merrick Garland is, not just as a lawyer, but as a man.

People respect the way he treats others, his genuine courtesy and respect for his colleagues and those who come before his court. They admire his civic-mindedness: mentoring his clerks throughout their careers, urging them to use their legal training to serve their communities, setting his own example by tutoring a young student at a Northeast DC elementary school each year for the past 18 years. They're moved by his deep devotion to his family: Lynn, his wife of nearly 30 years, and their two daughters, Becky and Jessie. As a family, they indulge their love of hiking and skiing and canoeing and their love of America by visiting our national parks.

People respect Merrick's deep and abiding passion for protecting our most basic constitutional rights. It's a passion, I'm told, that manifested itself at an early age. And one story is indicative of this, it's notable. As valedictorian of his high school class, he had to deliver a commencement address. The other student speaker that day spoke first and unleashed a fiery critique of the Vietnam War. Fearing the controversy that might result, several parents decided to unplug the sound system, and the rest of the student's speech was muffled.

And Merrick didn't necessarily agree with the tone of his classmate's remarks, nor his choice of topic for that day. But stirred by the sight of a fellow student's voice being silenced, he tossed aside his prepared remarks and delivered instead, on the spot, a passionate, impromptu defense of our First Amendment rights.

It was the beginning of a lifelong career—as a lawyer and a prosecutor and as a judge—de-

voted to protecting the rights of others. And he has done that work with decency and humanity and common sense and a common touch. And I'm proud that he'll continue that work on our Nation's highest court.

I said I would take this process seriously, and I did. I chose a serious man and an exemplary judge, Merrick Garland. Over my 7 years as President, in all my conversations with Senators from both parties in which I asked their views on qualified Supreme Court nominees—and this includes the previous two seats that I had to fill—the one name that has come up repeatedly, from Republicans and Democrats alike, is Merrick Garland.

Now, I recognize that we have entered the political season—or perhaps, these days it never ends—a political season that is even noisier and more volatile than usual. I know that Republicans will point to Democrats who have made it hard for Republican Presidents to get their nominees confirmed. And they're not wrong about that. There's been politics involved in nominations in the past. Although it should be pointed out that, in each of those instances, Democrats ultimately confirmed a nominee put forward by a Republican President.

I also know that because of Justice Scalia's outsized role on the Court and in American law and the fact that Americans are closely divided on a number of issues before the Court, it is tempting to make this confirmation process simply an extension of our divided politics, the squabbling that's going on in the news every day. But to go down that path would be wrong. It would be a betrayal of our best traditions and a betrayal of the vision of our founding documents.

At a time when our politics are so polarized, at a time when norms and customs of political rhetoric and courtesy and comity are so often treated like they're disposable, this is precisely the time when we should play it straight and treat the process of appointing a Supreme Court Justice with the seriousness and care it deserves. Because our Supreme Court really is unique. It's supposed to be above politics. It has to be. And it should stay that way.

To suggest that someone as qualified and respected as Merrick Garland doesn't even deserve a hearing, let alone an up-or-down vote, to join an institution as important as our Supreme Court, when two-thirds of Americans believe otherwise, that would be unprecedented.

To suggest that someone who has served his country with honor and dignity, with a distinguished track record of delivering justice for the American people, might be treated, as one Republican leader stated, as a political "piñata," that can't be right.

Tomorrow Judge Garland will travel to the Hill to begin meeting with Senators, one on one. I simply ask Republicans in the Senate to give him a fair hearing and then an up-or-down vote. If you don't, then it will not only be an abdication of the Senate's constitutional duty, it will indicate a process for nominating and confirming judges that is beyond repair. It will mean everything is subject to the most partisan of politics—everything. It will provoke an endless cycle of more tit-for-tat and make it increasingly impossible for any President, Democrat or Republican, to carry out their constitutional function. The reputation of the Supreme Court will inevitably suffer. Faith in our justice system will inevitably suffer. And our democracy will ultimately suffer as well.

I have fulfilled my constitutional duty. Now it's time for the Senate to do theirs. Presidents do not stop working in the final year of their term. Neither should a Senator. I know that tomorrow the Senate will take a break and leave town on recess for 2 weeks. My earnest hope is that Senators take that time to reflect on the importance of this process to our democracy: not what's expedient, not what's happening at the moment; what does this mean for our institutions, for our common life; the stakes, the consequences, the seriousness of the job we all swore an oath to do.

And when they return, I hope that they'll act in a bipartisan fashion. I hope they're fair. That's all. I hope they are fair. As they did when they confirmed Merrick Garland to the DC Circuit, I ask that they confirm Merrick Garland now to the Supreme Court so that he can take his seat in time to fully participate in

its work for the American people this fall. He is the right man for the job. He deserves to be confirmed. I could not be prouder of the work that he has already done on behalf of the American people. He deserves our thanks, and he deserves a fair hearing.

And with that, I'd like to invite Judge Garland to say a few words.

Associate Justice–designate Garland. Thank you, Mr. President. This is the greatest honor of my life, other than Lynn agreeing to marry me 28 years ago. It's also the greatest gift I've ever received except—and there's another caveat—the birth of our daughters, Jessie and Becky.

As my parents taught me by both words and deeds, a life of public service is as much a gift to the person who serves as it is to those he is serving. And for me, there could be no higher public service than serving as a member of the United States Supreme Court.

My family deserves much of the credit for the path that led me here. My grandparents left the Pale of Settlement at the border of western Russian and Eastern Europe in the early 1900s, fleeing anti-Semitism and hoping to make a better life for their children in America. They settled in the Midwest, eventually making their way to Chicago.

There, my father, who ran the smallest of small businesses from a room in our basement, took me with him as he made the rounds to his customers, always impressing upon me the importance of hard work and fair dealing. There, my mother headed the local PTA and school board and directed a volunteer services agency, all the while instilling in my sisters and me the understanding that service to the community is a responsibility above all others. Even now, my sisters honor that example by serving the children of their communities.

I know that my mother is watching this on television and crying her eyes out. [*Laughter*] So are my sisters, who have supported me in every step I have ever taken. I only wish that my father were here to see this today. I also wish that we hadn't taught my older daughter to be so adventurous that she would be hiking in the mountains, out of cell service range—[*laughter*]—when the President called. [*Laughter*]

It was the sense of responsibility to serve a community, instilled by my parents, that led me to leave my law firm to become a line prosecutor in 1989. There, one of my first assignments was to assist in the prosecution of a violent gang that had come down to the District from New York, took over a public housing project, and terrorized the residents. The hardest job we faced was persuading mothers and grandmothers that if they testified, we would be able to keep them safe and convict the gang members. We succeeded only by convincing witnesses and victims that they could trust that the rule of law would prevail.

Years later, when I went to Oklahoma City to investigate the bombing of the Federal Building, I saw up close the devastation that can happen when someone abandons the justice system as a way of resolving grievances, and instead takes matters into his own hands. Once again, I saw the importance of assuring victims and families that the justice system could work. We promised that we would find the perpetrators, that we would bring them to justice, and that we would do it in a way that honored the Constitution. The people of Oklahoma City gave us their trust, and we did everything we could to live up to it.

Trust that justice will be done in our courts without prejudice or partisanship is what, in a large part, distinguishes this country from others. People must be confident that a judge's decisions are determined by the law and only the law. For a judge to be worthy of such trust, he or she must be faithful to the Constitution and to the statutes passed by the Congress. He or she must put aside his personal views or preferences and follow the law, not make it.

Fidelity to the Constitution and the law has been the cornerstone of my professional life, and it's the hallmark of the kind of judge I have tried to be for the past 18 years. If the Senate sees fit to confirm me to the position for which I have been nominated today, I promise to continue on that course.

Mr. President, it's a great privilege to be nominated by a fellow Chicagoan. [*Laughter*] I

am grateful beyond words for the honor you have bestowed upon me.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:04 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Shirley Garland, mother of Associate Justice–designate Garland; and Sen. John Cornyn. Associate Justice-designate Garland referred to his sisters Jill Roter and Heidi Garland.

Remarks at a Women's History Month Reception
March 16, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello, hello, hello!

Audience member. We love you!

The President. You know, I can already tell this is kind of a rowdy bunch. [*Laughter*] It is good to see all of you. Welcome to the White House.

Thank you, Sana, for your incredible work. Ms. Marvel may be your comic book creation, but I think for a lot of young boys and girls, Sana is a real-life superhero. And there are a lot of them in this room, so I want to acknowledge a couple of them. First of all, we've got Cecile Richards in the house, making sure that women's health care is on the front burner. We've got America's first female NFL coach, Dr. Jennifer Welter. We have some outstanding Members of Congress, including Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi.

Now, I know I was the second choice for this gathering. [*Laughter*] You don't have to confirm it, and I know it. [*Laughter*] But Michelle has been at South by Southwest talking about her "Let Girls Learn" initiative to help 62 million girls around the world who are out of school and getting them into the classroom. So I could not be more proud of her work, and I will do my best to fill in. [*Laughter*] Because this is a pretty special event.

We have people here who have been working together to advance women's equality for decades, as well as members of a rising generation of activists and advocates and leaders who are picking up the mantle, taking the baton, and they are moving things forward. And it's because of all of you that we've accomplished so much these past 7 years.

Thanks to your efforts, the first law I signed when I came into office was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. We have expanded paid sick days and equal pay for more families, created more opportunities for women small-business owners. We passed the Affordable Care Act, which covers women's preventive care, including contraception; that says women can't be charged more for health insurance just because they're women. We are fighting hard against campus sexual assault.

Around the world, we lifted the global gag rule, developed a strategy to combat gender-based violence. And I am incredibly proud that I've appointed more female appointees and judges than any other President. In fact, the majority of my senior advisers are women, and—including on my national security team. They are a tough bunch. [*Laughter*]

And what's happening here at home is a reflection of the fact that the world has made enormous progress. A century ago, most women in the world were denied suffrage. Today, women in almost every country have the right to vote. Since 1990, maternal mortality rates have fallen by 44 percent. Women are living longer lives. We've cut extreme poverty in half. More women are going to school, earning their degrees, entering the workforce, contributing to their economies, and shaping the course of their nation.

And what we've seen, even in our own lifetimes, is that change is possible. That's why we have to keep fighting, because there are battles that still need to be won. We still need to fight for economic equality, for equal opportunities for entrepreneurs, for equal pay for equal work. We still need to make sure that paid family leave is not the exception around the country, but is the rule, and so that women, especially low-income women, don't lose their jobs for minor things like giving birth. [*Laughter*] We have to end violence against women.

We have to end the practices like child marriage. We've got to make sure that girls around the world have the same opportunities as boys to go to school.

And that is why we celebrate Women's History Month: not to get complacent, but to take a moment each year and celebrate the achievements that women have fought so hard to achieve and to rededicate ourselves to tackling the challenges that remain.

Now, our policies are aimed at bringing about equality. But a lot of what we have to do is not just up to government or corporate policy, it's up to each of us. One thing I've been thinking about this past week is the unique challenges women face in the virtual world. Last Friday, I was at South by Southwest, where the epidemic of online harassment was a topic of discussion. We know that women gamers face harassment and stalking and threats of violence from other players. When they speak out about their experiences, they're attacked on Twitter and other social media outlets, even threatened in their homes. One study shows that on Twitter, female journalists receive three times the abuse as their male colleagues. Too many young people face cyberbullying, especially in the LGBT community.

And what's brought these issues to light is that there are a lot of women out there, especially young women, who are speaking out bravely about their experiences, even when they know they'll be attacked for it, from feminist bloggers who refuse to be silenced to women sports reporters who are opening up about the extreme safety precautions they need to take when traveling for work. Every day, women of all ages and all backgrounds and walks of life are speaking out. And by telling their stories, by you telling your stories, women are lifting others out of the shadows and raising our collective consciousness about a problem that affects all of us.

After all, the Internet is not something separate from our lives, it is completely interwoven in our lives. It's how we connect with one another and where we get our information and how we create and break new ground and where people work and earn their livelihoods. If you're a teenager, I promise you, you are basically online all the time. [*Laughter*] I know. I've got a couple of them. [*Laughter*] The point is, the Internet is a public space where women have every right to exist freely and safely and without fear.

Audience member. That's right.

The President. And—[*applause*]. Now, obviously, this is not unique to the Internet. Women have been up against this kind of nonsense since the beginning of time. As long as women have dared to enter the public space, whether they're fighting for their rights or simply walking the streets, there have been times where they've been harassed by those who apparently see the mere presence of women as a threat.

But what's also true is that women have been speaking up and fighting back for just as long. And we can't let up now. And by the way, this is not just the role for women. It's about men speaking up and demanding better of themselves and their peers, their sons, their friends, their coworkers. Because we're all in this together.

Now, whenever I point out that women—or whenever I point out that any group of Americans—face challenges that some of us don't, I'm apparently being "divisive." [*Laughter*] There he goes again, being divisive, by pointing out that women earn less than men, or that women are frequent targets of sexual harassment, online or offline, or that women face greater threats of sexual violence. Essentially, they're arguing that by pointing out these challenges, I'm dividing us.

I want to say to those critics, this shouldn't divide us because you should care about it too.

Audience members. That's right.

The President. This is not about one group versus another. This is about how all of us can improve the situation for all of our daughters—and all of our sons—for future generations. This should matter to all Americans. Because we know that countries where women enjoy equality and can fulfill their potential do better than countries where women are oppressed. When any group of Americans are experiencing discrimination or not being treated fairly, that hurts all of us and it undermines our ide-

als. It corrodes our aspiration to ensure that every single one of us is entitled to a life of liberty and that we're able to pursue our happiness.

And when our society makes it possible for women to contribute their talents to our communities, then we all win. We all succeed. When technology is the key to the 21st century and economic success, I personally would like to see more women coders. I don't want them experiencing harassment. I want them to be able to come up with the great new software that's going to revolutionize some aspect of life.

When our companies need all the talent that they can get to compete around the world, we should be encouraging every CEO to make sure their workforces are reflective of America. We should be encouraging women to chase their ambitions and climb as high as their hard work and their skills can take them.

When it's long past time for our leaders to reflect the majority of the population, wouldn't it be better for America if women weren't discouraged from seeking office because of double standards and we had more women in positions of power and high office?

Now, I want to be clear. I'm not stereotyping here. [*Laughter*] But I'm pretty sure that if we had more women in charge, things would work better. I'm pretty sure that's true. I'm not saying you all are always right. [*Laughter*] I just want to be clear about that. [*Laughter*] When—I'm in a household where I'm outnumbered, and I just want—I know there are times where you, too, can be somewhat unreasonable. [*Laughter*] But in general, as a whole, I think it's fair to say that things would be a whole lot better if it was more reflective of our populations and the people who are doing a lot of the work that gets unpaid and who are holding communities together and making community organizations work and making places of worship work and making childrearing work.

The good news is, is that we've got a real opportunity to build a freer and fairer and more just society, online and offline. And that's why this spring, we'll be hosting the first-ever White House Summit on the United States of Women. It's going to be a chance to build on the progress that we've made to advance women's equality and to address the challenges that still remain.

And I'm incredibly optimistic about what we can achieve at this summit and beyond. And I draw my optimism from the fact that we've already achieved so much. I've told this story before, but my grandmother, who helped raise me, she worked in a bank. So she worked her way up from being a secretary, with a high school education, all the way up to being the vice president of a regional bank. And she was smart, and she was hard-working, and she was really good at her job.

And at some point, she hit the glass ceiling though. And then, she trained men to do the job of "supervising" her, even though she knew the job better than they did. Today, my daughters believe that every daughter—door is open to them. They can't—they would not put up with that. [*Laughter*] It wouldn't even occur to them that they couldn't climb to the top of whatever field that they chose. In the space of one generation, women like those in this room have moved mountains. They know you can be the Speaker of the House because they've seen Nancy Pelosi. They know that they can draw comic books or can direct film or can be an astronaut or do whatever they want.

Audience members. President!

The President. They take that for—and I've got to be careful; this is not a political event. [*Laughter*]

And they've got role models like Dr. Welter, who once said, "My opportunity could create other opportunities, and I love everything about that." That's what all of you represent here. And that's the work that you've done together and with us these past 7 years, fighting for a better future for my daughters, but also for our sons.

Because I believe as much as I believe in anything that we liberate ourselves when we liberate others. We give ourselves opportunity when we give other people opportunity. We benefit when we see other people prosper. And together, I know that we can fulfill the basic promise of our Nation: that every child, no matter what her background or income or race

or gender, that she can succeed. She can make of her life what she will.

You guys are all examples of that. So keep up the great work. Thank you very much. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:23 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sana Amanat, director of content and character development, Marvel Comics, LLC, who introduced the President; Cecile Richards, president, Planned Parenthood Federation of America; and Jennifer Welter, former intern/linebackers coach, National Football League's Arizona Cardinals.

Message to the Congress on Blocking Property of the Government of North Korea and the Workers' Party of Korea, and Prohibiting Certain Transactions With Respect to North Korea

March 15, 2016

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (the "order") with respect to North Korea. The order takes additional steps with respect to the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13466 of June 26, 2008, expanded in scope in Executive Order 13551 of August 30, 2010, relied upon for additional steps in Executive Order 13570 of April 18, 2011, and further expanded in scope in Executive Order 13687 of January 2, 2015. The order also facilitates implementation of certain provisions of the North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act of 2016 (Public Law 114–122), which I signed on February 18, 2016, and ensures the implementation of certain provisions of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2270 of March 2, 2016.

In 2008, upon terminating the exercise of certain authorities under the Trading With the Enemy Act (TWEA) with respect to North Korea, the President issued Executive Order 13466 and declared a national emergency pursuant to IEEPA to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by the existence and risk of the proliferation of weapons-usable fissile material on the Korean Peninsula. Executive Order 13466 continued certain restrictions on North Korea and North Korean nationals that had been in place under TWEA.

In 2010, I issued Executive Order 13551. In that order, I determined that the Government of North Korea's continued provocative actions destabilized the Korean peninsula and imperiled U.S. Armed Forces, allies, and trading partners in the region and warranted the imposition of additional sanctions, and I expanded the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13466. In Executive Order 13551, I ordered blocked the property and interests in property of three North Korean entities and one individual listed in the Annex to that order and provided criteria under which the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, may designate additional persons whose property and interests in property shall be blocked.

In 2011, I issued Executive Order 13570 to further address the national emergency with respect to North Korea and to strengthen the implementation of UNSCRs 1718 and 1874. That Executive Order prohibited the direct or indirect importation of goods, services, and technology from North Korea.

In 2015, I issued Executive Order 13687, in which I determined that the provocative, destabilizing, and repressive actions and policies of the Government of North Korea constitute a continuing threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States, and further expanded the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13466. In Execu-

tive Order 13687 I provided additional criteria under which the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, may designate additional persons whose property and interests in property shall be blocked.

I have now determined that the Government of North Korea's continuing pursuit of its nuclear and missile programs, as evidenced most recently by its February 7, 2016, launch using ballistic missile technology and its January 6, 2016, nuclear test in violation of its obligations pursuant to numerous UNSCRs and in contravention of its commitments under the September 19, 2005, Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks, increasingly imperils the United States and its allies. The order addresses those actions and takes additional steps with respect to the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13466 of June 26, 2008. The order also facilitates implementation of certain provisions of the North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act of 2016 (Public Law 114–122), which I signed on February 18, 2016, and ensures the implementation of certain provisions of UNSCR 2270 of March 2, 2016.

The order is not targeted at the people of North Korea, but rather is aimed at the Government of North Korea and its activities that threaten the United States and others. It blocks the property and interests in property of the Government of North Korea and the Workers' Party of Korea and provides additional criteria for blocking the property and interests in property of any person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State:

- to operate in such industries in the North Korean economy as may be determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, such as transportation, mining, energy, or financial services;
- to have sold, supplied, transferred, or purchased, directly or indirectly, to or from North Korea or any person acting for or on behalf of the Government of North Korea or the Workers' Party of Korea, metal, graphite, coal, or software, where any revenue or goods received may benefit the Government of North Korea or the Workers' Party of Korea, including North Korea's nuclear or ballistic missile programs;
- to have engaged in, facilitated, or been responsible for an abuse or violation of human rights by the Government of North Korea or the Workers' Party of Korea or any person acting for or on behalf of either such entity;
- to have engaged in, facilitated, or been responsible for the exportation of workers from North Korea, including exportation to generate revenue for the Government of North Korea or the Workers' Party of Korea;
- to have engaged in significant activities undermining cybersecurity through the use of computer networks or systems against targets outside of North Korea on behalf of the Government of North Korea or the Workers' Party of Korea;
- to have engaged in, facilitated, or been responsible for censorship by the Government of North Korea or the Workers' Party of Korea;
- to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order;
- to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order; or
- to have attempted to engage in any of the activities described above.

In addition, the order prohibits:

- the exportation of goods, services, and technology to North Korea;
- new investment in North Korea; and

- the approval, financing, facilitation, or guarantee of such exports and investments.

Finally, the order suspends entry into the United States of any alien determined to meet one or more of the above criteria.

I have delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury the authority, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the order. All executive agencies are directed to take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of the order.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 15, 2016.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 16. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks During a Teleconference Call on the Nomination of Merrick B. Garland To Be a United States Supreme Court Associate Justice
March 17, 2016

Hey, everybody. Thanks for joining the call. I'm not going to be long because Valerie and others are giving you some of the background on this.

As you now know, I nominated Chief Judge Merrick Garland of the DC Circuit to serve as the next associate justice on the Supreme Court. This is not a decision I ever take lightly. I've now seated two Supreme Court justices; this would be the third. The men and women on the Supreme Court, they're the final arbiters of our laws. And it means that this is one of those moments where you have to rise above short-term politics and think about the institution of the Court and the institution of the Presidency and how does our democracy work.

I chose Chief Judge Garland because this guy is as well qualified as anybody who's ever been nominated to the Supreme Court. That's not just my opinion, that's pretty much a universal opinion. He possesses one of America's sharpest legal minds. He brings a spirit of decency and modesty and integrity and even-handedness to his work. His work is excellent. He is somebody who has worked as a prosecutor. As you know, he is somebody who not only helped lead the investigation around the Oklahoma City bombings, but did so in a way that showed enormous compassion towards the people who had been impacted.

He's been praised by Republicans and Democrats. During his original confirmation process when he was put on the DC Circuit, majorities of each party supported him. Republican Senator Orrin Hatch, who has been the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, said, "In all honesty, I would like to see one person come to this floor and say one reason why Merrick Garland does not deserve this position." I couldn't agree more.

And the Constitution is clear that it's my job as President to nominate candidates to the Supreme Court. It's the Senate's job to give them a timely hearing and an up-or-down vote. I fulfilled my constitutional duty yesterday, and I expect now the Senate to do its job, as well. And the American people deserve no less.

But in order to make this happen, I'm going to need your help. Republican leaders have said they believe the American people should have a say. Well, the American people did have a say back in 2012 when they elected me President. And they had a say when they elected the current Senators as Senators. They didn't add a caveat that said we want you to be President except for your last 300 days in office when you don't have to fulfill your duties. And they

didn't elect Senators and say, you know what, this is only a three-quarters or a half a term; you get elected for the full term, and you're expected to do your job during that entire time.

So the American people have already had a say, but now what we need to do is make sure the American people will remind Senators that they have a job to do. Senators that are trying to obstruct the process need to be told that we expect the Supreme Court to be above partisan politics and that the Court should be operating at full capacity to help the American people.

So you've got somebody with unimpeachable credentials, somebody the Republicans have themselves acknowledged is qualified. I have made this nomination. The Court needs to have an additional justice in order to be able to weigh on some of the most important issues that affect everybody's lives: our voting rights; our freedom of speech; issues like immigration; issues like our environment, clean air and clean water; issues of workplace safety. And the notion that somehow we would suspend all that because it's an election year is not in the Constitution, and it's not been our tradition.

And by the way, I think everybody on this call recognizes the election season lasts longer and longer every time. So the election season started 6 months, 9 months, a year ago. Are they suggesting somehow that we should have suspended our work in December or in June of last year, when the Presidential candidates were already running around Iowa? I'm assuming that's not the argument they're making.

And as Valerie already pointed out, it's not as if we haven't had Supreme Court nominees confirmed during election years before. The difference is, typically, it's been Republican Presidents making the nominations and Democratic Senates—or Democratic majorities in the Senate who have confirmed them. And what we're asking is simply that the Senate acts fairly in dealing with an outstanding individual who deserves to be on the Supreme Court.

Be fair. That's something we all learned in kindergarten, and it's something that the American people I think understand should apply when it comes to the highest court in the land and how we make sure that our democracy and our judicial system work.

So make yourselves heard. Let Senators know that this is something that you care deeply about. And it goes beyond just the typical partisan disagreements that we have; this has to do with the integrity of our system of government. And it's something that I care deeply about, and I'm going to make sure to fight for for the remainder of my term as President. And I hope that you're right there with me. Okay?

Thank you so much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:18 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House Senior Adviser Valerie B. Jarrett; and Supreme Court Associate Justices Sonia M. Sotomayor and Elena Kagan. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the United States-Kazakhstan Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters
March 17, 2016

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Treaty between the United States of America and the Republic of Kazakhstan on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, signed at Washington on February 20, 2015. I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to the Treaty.

The Treaty is one of a series of modern mutual legal assistance treaties negotiated by the United States to more effectively counter criminal activities. The Treaty should enhance our ability to investigate and prosecute a wide variety of crimes.

The Treaty provides for a broad range of cooperation in criminal matters. Under the Treaty, the Parties agree to assist each other by, among other things: producing evidence (such as testimony, documents, or items) obtained voluntarily or, where necessary, by compulsion; arranging for persons, including persons in custody, to travel to another country to provide evidence; serving documents; executing searches and seizures; locating and identifying persons or items; and freezing and forfeiting assets or property that may be the proceeds or instrumentalities of crime.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Treaty, and give its advice and consent to ratification.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 17, 2016.

The President's Weekly Address
March 19, 2016

Hi, everybody. One of the most consequential responsibilities our Constitution grants a President is appointing a Supreme Court Justice. The men and women who sit on the Supreme Court safeguard our rights. They ensure that ours is a system of laws, not of men. And they're given the essential task of applying the principles written into our founding documents to the most challenging questions of today.

So this is a duty I take very seriously. It requires me to set aside short-term politics in order to maintain faith with our Founders. And on Wednesday, after weeks of consultations with Republicans, Democrats, and leaders across the country, I selected a nominee whose unmatched experience and integrity have earned him the respect and admiration of both parties: Chief Judge Merrick Garland.

Judge Garland grew up in my hometown of Chicago, with parents who taught him to work hard and deal fairly. As a young lawyer, he left a lucrative private firm to work for half as much in public service. Eventually, he oversaw the Federal response to the Oklahoma City bombing, working side by side with first responders, victims, and their families to bring justice for an unspeakable crime. And everywhere he went during that investigation, he carried with him in his briefcase the program from the memorial service with each of the victims' names inside.

For the last 19 years, Judge Garland has served on what's known as the second highest court in the land—the DC Circuit Court—including the last 3 years as Chief Judge. On the bench, he's shown a dedication to protecting our basic rights; a conviction that powerful voices must not be allowed to drown out those of everyday Americans; an understanding that justice isn't simply abstract legal theory, it affects people's daily lives; and a spirit of decency, modesty, and evenhandedness in his work. Judge Garland is admired for his courtesy, his devotion to family, and his civic-mindedness. For the past 18 years, he's served as a tutor for young students at a local DC elementary school.

During my time as President, through three separate Supreme Court appointments, in conversations with Republicans and Democrats alike, one name came up more than any other: Merrick Garland.

I understand that we're in the middle of an especially noisy and volatile political season. But at a time when our politics are so polarized, when norms and customs of our political rhetoric seem to be corroding, this is precisely the time we should treat the appointment of a Supreme Court justice with the seriousness it deserves. Because our Supreme Court is supposed to be above politics, not an extension of politics. And it should stay that way.

So I ask Republicans in the Senate to give Judge Garland the respect he has earned. Give him a hearing. Give him an up-or-down vote. To deny it would be an abdication of the Senate's constitutional duty. It would indicate a

process for nominating and confirming judges that is beyond repair. It would make it increasingly impossible for any President, Republican or Democrat, to carry out their constitutional function. To go down that path would jeopardize our system of justice, it would hurt our democracy, and it would betray the vision of our founding.

I've fulfilled my constitutional duty. Now it's time for Senators to do theirs. I hope that they take the time to reflect on the importance of this process to our country. I hope that they'll act fairly. And I hope they'll work in a bipartisan fashion to confirm Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court. That's how we can uphold our pledge to liberty and justice for all, for our time and for generations to come.

Thanks, everybody. And have a good weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:05 p.m. on March 18 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on March 19. In the address, the President referred to Shirley Garland, mother of Supreme Court Associate Justice–designate Merrick B. Garland; and Associate Justices Sonia M. Sotomayor and Elena Kagan. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 18, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 19. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks to United States Embassy Personnel and Families in Havana, Cuba
March 20, 2016

The President. Thank you. *Muchas gracias.* Hello! Well, it's so good to see everybody. Thank you. Hello, everybody.

Audience members. Hi!

The President. Well, as our Ambassador—or Chief of Mission just stated, the—it's been nearly 90 years since a U.S. President stepped foot in Cuba. It is wonderful to be here.

Back in 1928, President Coolidge came on a battleship. It took him 3 days to get here. It only took me 3 hours. [*Laughter*] For the first time ever, Air Force One has landed in Cuba, and this is our very first stop. So this is a historic visit, and it's a historic opportunity to engage directly with the Cuban people and to forge new agreements and commercial deals, to build new ties between our two peoples, and for me to lay out my vision for a future that's brighter than our past.

Michelle and I wanted to start with all of you because nothing symbolizes better the new relationship between the United States and the Cuban people. For the first time in more than half a century, as Jeff just noted, the American flag flies over a reopened U.S. Embassy. And having a U.S. Embassy here means that we're able to more effectively advance our interests and our values and understand the Cuban people and their concerns.

I want to thank the outstanding leadership team that's here, especially our outstanding Ambassador, Jeff DeLaurentis, and his wonderful wife Jennifer. Give them a big round of applause. As well as DCM Scott Hamilton and his wife Isabel. Give them a big round of applause. Yay!

But most of all, I want to thank all of you, who embody the spirit of friendship and partnership that brings us together today. We've got a lot of proud Americans here, but we also have a lot of proud Cubans. So, *como andan?* [*Laughter*]

I want to mention three of our Cuban friends who have been a part of your work for decades, including all those years when we only had an Interest Section here: a guard for 30 years, Carlos Flores; in our visa section, Caridad Castellanos; and a dedicated driver for almost 40 years, Francisco Camargo. Yay!

So I know it's been a pretty busy 7 months. You've had to stand up America's newest Embassy, you've helped support high-profile visitors from across the administration and the business community and now me and Michelle. And I know your workload is a lot heavier than it was, but I want you to know

everything we've accomplished so far—more Americans coming to Cuba; more engagement with the Cuban people, civil society, faith groups, entrepreneurs, students, young people; more opportunities for the Cuban people to improve their lives—it's all happening because of you. Every single day, you're bringing the Cuban people and the American people closer together.

So, oftentimes, when I come to Embassies, it attracts a lot of attention, and this one attracts more attention than usual. [*Laughter*] But I always say to people that no matter how much people are excited about Michelle's visit or my visit, the most important ambassadors to the United—for the United States are all of you, because you're the ones who, every day, are interacting with Cubans here. You're helping businesses who are trying to figure out ways that they can start working together. You're helping people with visas. You're helping people with a whole range of things. And so the interactions you have end up having the most lasting impact, because it sends a signal of the professionalism and dedication and the kindness and courtesy that I want the American people always to represent.

And so I am so grateful to all of you for the great work that you've done. I'm glad that you had a chance to bring your families here—[*laughter*]—because I always like taking pictures with kids. [*Laughter*] That's the future that we hope for; young American children, young Cuban children, by the time they're adults, our hope is, is that they think it's natural that a U.S. President should be visiting Cuba, they think it's natural that the two peoples are working together. Their future is what we work for so hard, and I'm so grateful to all of you for making it happen.

Thank you very much. *Muchas gracias.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:23 p.m. in the Telde Ballroom of the Meliá Habana hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Chargé d'Affaires Jeffrey DeLaurentis, who introduced the President; and Deputy Chief of Mission Scott Hamilton.

The President's News Conference With President Raúl Castro Ruz of Cuba in Havana
March 21, 2016

President Castro. Mr. President Barack Obama, we are pleased to welcome you on this, the first visit of a President of the United States of America to our country in 88 years. We have observed that in the 15 months that have passed since the decision was made to establish our diplomatic relations, we have obtained concrete results. We were able to resume direct postal exchanges, and we signed an agreement to resume commercial flights.

We have signed two memorandums of understanding on the protection of the environment and maritime areas and another one to secure the safety of sea navigation. Today another one will be signed on cooperation in the area of agriculture. At the moment, another set of bilateral instruments are being negotiated to cooperate in such areas as counternarcotics, the safety of commerce and travelers, and health. About this last issue, we have agreed to deepen our cooperation in the prevention and treatment of transmissible diseases such as Zika and nontransmissible chronic diseases, cancer included.

This cooperation is beneficial not only for Cuba and the United States, but also for our hemisphere at large. Following the decisions made by President Obama to modify the application of some aspects of the blockade, Cuban enterprises and their American counterparts are working to identify possible commercial operations that could materialize in the still restrictive framework of existing regulations.

The fact is that some have already materialized, especially in the area of telecommunications, an area in which our country already has a program designed on the basis of its priorities and the necessary technological sovereignty,

one that can secure the appropriate use and the service of national interests.

Progress has also been made toward the acquisition of medicines, medical material, and equipment for power generation and environmental protection, these among others. Much more could be done if the U.S. blockade were lifted.

We recognize the position of President Obama and his administration against the blockade and his repeated appeals to Congress to have it removed. The most recent measures adopted by his administration are positive, but insufficient. I have the opportunity to discuss with the President other steps that we think could be taken in order to remove restrictions that remain in force and make a significant contribution to the debunking of the blockade. This is essential because the blockade remains in force and because it contains discouraging elements and intimidating effects and extraterritorial outreach. I put forward to the President some examples on this, showing their negative consequences for both Cuba and other countries.

The blockade stands as the most important obstacle to our economic development and the well-being of the Cuban people. That's why its removal will be of the essence to normalize bilateral relations. And actually, it will also bring benefits to the Cuban émigrés who wish the best for their families and their country. In order to move forward towards normalization, it will also be necessary to return the territory illegally occupied by Guantanamo naval base.

Since they stand as the two main obstacles, these issues were again dealt with in the editorial ran on March 9 by the official newspaper of the Communist Party of Cuba and again only 4 days ago in the press conference offered by our Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez, both pieces extensively reported by the media.

Other policies should also be abolished for normal relations to develop between the United States and Cuba. No one should intend to have the Cuban people renounce the destiny it chose in freedom and sovereignty, the same for which it has made enormous sacrifices.

We also discussed international issues, particularly those that could have an impact on regional peace and stability. We had thought to discuss other issues, but we did not have enough time. I had planned to raise our concern over the destabilization some are trying to promote in Venezuela, something which we consider to be counterproductive to the overall situation in the continent. I did not have the chance to raise it with him; I'm raising it here.

Likewise, we talked about the ongoing peace process in Colombia and the efforts to put an end to that conflict. There are profound differences between our countries that will not go away. Since we hold different concepts on many subjects such as political systems, democracy, the exercise of human rights, social justice, international relations, and world peace and stability.

We defend human rights. In our view, civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights are indivisible, interdependent, and universal. Actually, we find it inconceivable that a government does not defend and ensure the right to health care, education, social security, food provision and development, equal pay, and the rights of children. We oppose political manipulation and double standards in the approach to human rights.

Cuba has much to say and show on this issue. That is why I have reiterated to the President our willingness to continue moving forward with the dialogue on this matter that was already initiated.

On December 17, 2014, as we announced the decision to reestablish diplomatic relations, I said that we should learn the art of coexisting with our differences in a civilized manner. In my remarks to Parliament on July 15, 2015, I said changing everything that needs to be changed is the sovereign and exclusive concern of Cubans. The revolutionary Government is willing to advance toward normalization of relations, for it is convinced that both countries can coexist and cooperate in a civilized manner and for the mutual benefit regardless of existing and future differences and thus contribute to peace, security, stability, development, and equity in our continent and around the world.

Today I reaffirmed that we should exercise the art of civilized coexistence, which involves accepting and respecting differences and preventing these from becoming the center of our relationship. We should instead promote links that can benefit both our countries and peoples while focusing on those things that bring us closer and not on those that pull us apart. We agree that a long and complex path still lies ahead. But what is most important is that we have started taking the first steps to build a new type of relationship, one that has never existed between Cuba and the United States.

Actually, destroying a bridge can be an easy and quick undertaking. However, its solid reconstruction can prove a lengthy and challenging endeavor. After four failed attempts and giving proof of her will and perseverance, on September 2, 2013, American swimmer Diane Nyad managed to cross the Florida Straits, swimming without an antishark cage to protect her.

For that exploit of conquering the geographical distance between our two countries—it was for that exploit that on August 30, 2014, as the national anthems of Cuba and the United States were played, she was presented with the Order of Sport Merits, a decoration awarded by the State Council. Such feat carries a powerful message, one that should serve as an example to our bilateral relations. For it confirms that if she could do it, then we can do it too.

To President Obama, I reiterate our appreciation for his visit and the willingness of the Government of Cuba to continue moving forward in the forthcoming months, for the well-being of our peoples and countries. Thank you very much.

President Obama. Buenas tardes. President Castro, to you, the Cuban Government, and the Cuban people, thank you for the welcome that you have extended to me, to my family, and to my delegation. For more than half a century, the sight of a U.S. President here in Havana would have been unimaginable. But this is a new day—*es un nuevo día*—between our two countries.

Death of Staff Sergeant Louis F. Cardin, USMC, in Northern Iraq

With your indulgence, Mr. President, I want to go just briefly off topic because during this weekend, I received news that one of our outstanding United States Armed Servicemembers, Marine Staff Sergeant Louis F. Cardin of Temecula, California, was killed in northern Iraq as we assisted the Iraqi Government in dealing with ISIL, the terrorist organization there. And I just wanted to give my thoughts and prayers to the family there and those who have been injured. It's a reminder that even as we embark on this historic visit, there are U.S. Armed Servicemembers who are sacrificing each and every day on behalf of our freedom and our safety. So I'm grateful to them.

Cuba-U.S. Relations

My wife Michelle and I brought our daughters—and by the way, they don't always want to go with us; they're teenagers now. They have friends at home, and they have things to do, but they wanted to come to Cuba because they understood, and we wanted to show them, the beauty of Cuba and its people. We were moved by the Cubans who received us yesterday, smiling and waving, as we drove in from the airport. We were grateful for the opportunity to experience Old Havana and some excellent Cuban food. Our visit to the Cathedral was a reminder of the values that we share, of the deep faith that sustains so many Cubans and Americans. And it also gave me an opportunity to express my gratitude to Cardinal Ortega, who, along with His Holiness Pope Francis, did so much to support the improved relations between our governments. This morning I was honored to pay tribute to José Martí, not only his role in Cuban independence, but the profound words that he wrote and spoke in support of liberty and freedom everywhere.

I bring with me the greetings and the friendship of the American people. In fact, I'm joined on this trip by nearly 40 Members of Congress, Democrats and Republicans. This is the largest such delegation of my Presidency, and it indicates the excitement and interest in

America about the process that we've undertaken. These Members of Congress recognize that our new relationship with the Cuban people is in the interest of both nations. I'm also joined by some of America's top business leaders and entrepreneurs because we're ready to pursue more commercial ties, which create jobs and opportunity for Cubans and Americans alike.

And I'm especially pleased that I'm joined on this trip by so many Cuban Americans. For them and for the more than 2 million proud Cuban Americans across the United States, this is a moment filled with great emotion. Ever since we made it easier to travel between our countries, more Cuban Americans are coming home. And for many, this is a time of new hope for the future.

So, President Castro, I want to thank you for the courtesy and the spirit of openness that you've shown during our talks. At our meeting in Panama last year, you said that we're willing to discuss every issue, and everything is on the table. So, with your understanding, my statement will be a little longer than usual.

President Castro always jokes with me about how long Castro brothers' speeches can be. But I'm going to actually go a little longer than you probably today, with your indulgence. We have a half a century of work to catch up on.

Our growing engagement with Cuba is guided by one overarching goal: advancing the mutual interests of our two countries, including improving the lives of our people, both Cubans and Americans. That's why I'm here. I've said consistently, after more than five very difficult decades, the relationship between our governments will not be transformed overnight. We continue, as President Castro indicated, to have some very serious differences, including on democracy and human rights. And President Castro and I have had very frank and candid conversations on these subjects.

The United States recognizes progress that Cuba has made as a nation, its enormous achievements in education and in health care. And perhaps most importantly, I affirmed that Cuba's destiny will not be decided by the United States or any other nation. Cuba is sovereign and rightly has great pride. And the future of Cuba will be decided by Cubans, not by anybody else.

At the same time, as we do wherever we go around the world, I made it clear that the United States will continue to speak up on behalf of democracy, including the right of the Cuban people to decide their own future. We'll speak out on behalf of universal human rights, including freedom of speech and assembly and religion. Indeed, I look forward to meeting with and hearing from Cuban civil society leaders tomorrow.

But as you heard, President Castro has also addressed what he views as shortcomings in the United States around basic needs for people and poverty and inequality and race relations. And we welcome that constructive dialogue as well, because we believe that when we share our deepest beliefs and ideas with an attitude of mutual respect, that we can both learn and make the lives of our people better.

Now, part of normalizing relations means that we discuss these differences directly. So I'm very pleased that we've agreed to hold our next U.S.-Cuba human rights dialogue here in Havana this year. And both of our countries will welcome visits by independent United Nations experts as we combat human trafficking, which we agree is a profound violation of human rights.

Even as we discuss these differences, we share a belief that we can continue to make progress in those areas that we have in common. President Castro, you said in Panama that "we might disagree on something today on which we would agree tomorrow." And that's certainly been the case over the past 15 months and the days leading up to this visit. And today I can report that we continue to move forward on many fronts when it comes to normalizing relations.

We're moving ahead with more opportunities for Americans to travel to Cuba and interact with the Cuban people. Over the past year, the number of Americans coming here has surged. Last week, we gave approval for individual Americans to come here for educational travel. U.S. airlines will begin direct commercial flights

this year. With last week's port security announcement, we've removed the last major hurdle to resuming cruises and ferry service. All of which will mean even more Americans visiting Cuba in the years ahead and appreciating the incredible history and culture of the Cuban people.

We're moving ahead with more trade. With only 90 miles between us, we're natural trading partners. Other steps we took last week—allowing the U.S. dollar to be used more widely with Cuba, giving Cubans more access to the dollar in international transactions, and allowing Cubans in the U.S. to earn salaries—these things will do more to create opportunities for trade and joint ventures. We welcome Cuba's important announcement that it plans to end the 10-percent penalty on dollar conversions here, which will open the door to more travel and more commerce. And these steps show that we're opening up to one another.

With this visit, we've agreed to deepen our cooperation on agriculture to support our farmers and our ranchers. This afternoon I'll highlight some of the new commercial deals being announced by major U.S. companies. And just as I continue to call on Congress to lift the trade embargo, I discussed with President Castro the steps we urge Cuba to take to show that it's ready to do more business, which includes allowing more joint ventures and allowing foreign companies to hire Cubans directly.

We're moving ahead with our efforts to help connect more Cubans to the Internet and the global economy. Under President Castro, Cuba has set a goal of bringing Cubans online. And we want to help. At this afternoon's entrepreneurship event, I'll discuss additional steps we're taking to help more Cubans learn, innovate, and do business online. Because in the 21st century, countries cannot be successful unless their citizens have access to the Internet.

We're moving ahead with more educational exchanges. Thanks to the generous support of the Cuban American community, I can announce that my 100,000 Strong in the Americas initiative will offer new opportunities for university students to study abroad: more Americans at Cuban schools and more Cubans at U.S. schools. And going forward, educational grants and scholarships will be available to Cuban students. And in partnership with the Cuban Government, we'll offer more English language training for Cuban teachers, both in Cuba and online.

Now, even as Cubans prepare for the arrival of the Rolling Stones—[*laughter*]—we're moving ahead with more events and exchanges that bring Cubans and Americans together as well. We all look forward to tomorrow's matchup between the Tampa Bay Rays and the Cuban National Team.

And more broadly, we're moving ahead with partnerships in health, science, and the environment. Just as Cubans and American medical teams have worked together in Haiti against cholera and in West Africa against Ebola—and I want to give a special commendation to Cuban doctors who volunteered and took on some very tough assignments to save lives in West Africa in partnership with us and other nations; we very much appreciate the work that they did—our medical professionals will now collaborate in new areas, preventing the spread of viruses like Zika and leading new research into cancer vaccines. Our governments will also work together to protect the beautiful waters of this region that we share.

And as two countries threatened by climate change, I believe we can work together to protect communities at our low-lying coasts. And we're inviting Cuba to join us and our Caribbean and Central American partners at this spring's regional energy summit in Washington.

And finally, we're moving ahead with our closer cooperation on regional security. We're working to deepen our law enforcement coordination, especially against narcotraffickers that threaten both of our peoples. I want to thank President Castro and the Cuban Government for hosting peace talks between the Colombian Government and the FARC. And we remain optimistic that Colombians can achieve a lasting and just peace. And although we did not have an extensive discussion of Venezuela, we did touch on the subject. And I be-

lieve that the whole region has an interest in a country that is addressing its economic challenges, is responsive to the aspirations of its people, and is a source of stability in the region. That is, I believe, an interest that we should all share.

So again, President Castro, I want to thank you for welcoming me. I think it's fair to say that the United States and Cuba are now engaged across more areas than any time during my lifetime. And with every passing day, more Americans are coming to Cuba, more U.S. businesses and schools and faith groups are working to forge new partnerships with the Cuban people. More Cubans are benefiting from the opportunities that this travel and trade bring.

As you indicated, the road ahead will not be easy. Fortunately, we don't have to swim with sharks in order to achieve the goals that you and I have set forth. As you say here in Cuba, *echar para adelante.* Despite the difficulties, we will continue to move forward. We're focused on the future.

And I'm absolutely confident that if we stay on this course, we can deliver a better and brighter future for both the Cuban people and the American people.

So *muchas gracias.* Thank you very much.

Moderator. We now will have a short Q&A session, so I kindly ask the journalists to identify themselves and use the mikes that are in the room. A first question for President Barack Obama.

Cuba-U.S. Relations/Human Rights

President Obama. First question, Jim Acosta [CNN].

[*At this point, the reporter spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. Thank you, President Castro, for your hospitality here in Havana.

[*The reporter spoke in English as follows.*]

Q. And thank you, Mr. President. In your meeting with President Castro, what words did you use to urge him to pursue democratic reforms and expand human rights here in Cuba? Will you invite President Castro to the White House? We know he's been to New York. And why did you not meet with Fidel Castro? And President Castro——

[*The reporter spoke in Spanish and then translated his remarks into English as follows.*]

Q. My father is Cuban. He left for the United States when he was very young. This is a new and democratic direction for your country? And please, sir, why do you have Cuban political prisoners?

[*The reporter spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. And why don't you release them? And another last question: Who do you prefer, Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump? Thank you.

President Obama. The—well, as I think we both indicated, we had a very frank conversation around issues of democracy and human rights. Our starting point is that we have two different systems: two different systems of government, two different economies. And we have decades of profound differences, both bilaterally and internationally.

What I have said to President Castro is that we are moving forward and not looking backwards, that we don't view Cuba as a threat to the United States. I hope that my visit here indicates the degree to which we're setting a new chapter in Cuban-American relations.

But as is true with countries around the world where we have normalized relations, we will continue to stand up for basic principles that we believe in. America believes in democracy. We believe that freedom of speech and freedom of assembly and freedom of religion are not just American values, but are universal values. They may not express themselves exactly in the same way in every country, they may not be enshrined in the founding documents or constitutions of every country the same way or protected legally in exactly the same ways, but the impulse, the human impulse towards

freedom, the freedom that José Martí talked about, we think is a universal longing.

President Castro, I think, has pointed out that, in his view, making sure that everybody is getting a decent education or health care, has basic security in old age—that those things are human rights as well. I personally would not disagree with him.

But it doesn't detract from some of these other concerns. And the goal of the human rights dialogue is not for the United States to dictate to Cuba how they should govern themselves, but to make sure that we are having a frank and candid conversation around this issue and, hopefully, that we can learn from each other.

It does not mean that it has to be the only issue we talk about. Economics, health, scientific exchanges, international cooperation on issues of regional as well as global import are also important. But this is something that we are going to stay on. And I actually welcome President Castro commenting on some of the areas where he feels that we're falling short, because I think we should not be immune or afraid of criticism or discussion as well.

Here's the one thing I do know is that when I talk to Cuban Americans—and, Jim, you're second generation, and so I think I speak not for you directly, but for many that I talk to around the United States—I think there is enormous hope that there can be reconciliation. And the bridge that President Castro discussed can be built between the Cuban American community and Cubans here. There are family ties and cultural ties that are so strong. And I think everyone would benefit from those ties being reestablished.

One of the impediments to strengthening those ties is these disagreements around human rights and democracy. And if—to the extent that we can have a good conversation about that and to actually make progress, that, I think, will allow us to see the full flowering of a relationship that is possible. In the absence of that, I think it will continue to be a very powerful irritant. And this is not unique to U.S.-Cuban relations. It's one that, as you know, I have conversations with when we go to bilateral meetings with some of our very close allies, as well as countries that we don't have as close of a relationship to. But I think it is something that matters. And I've met with people who have been subject to arbitrary detention, and that's something that I generally have to speak out on because I hear from them directly and I know what it means for them. Go ahead.

[*President Castro spoke in Spanish to an unidentified aide, and no translation was provided.*]

President Obama. Excuse me. [*Laughter*]

President Castro. Yes?

President Obama. Yes, yes, what—[*laughter*].

President Castro. I was asking if he was—if his question was directed to me or to President Obama. You talked about—no——

President Obama. I think the second one was addressed to you.

President Castro. You talked about political prisoners.

President Obama. And Trump and Hillary. [*Laughter*]

President Castro. For him or for me?

[*The reporter spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. For you, President Castro.

President Castro. What did you say about political prisoners? Can you repeat that question about political prisoners? Did you ask if we had political prisoners? Did you ask if we had political prisoners?

[*The reporter spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. I wanted to know if you have Cuban political prisoners and why you don't release them.

President Castro. Well, give me the list of the political prisoners, and I will release them immediately. Just mention a list. What political prisoners? Give me a name or names. Or when—after this meeting is over, you can give me a list of political prisoners. And if we have

those political prisoners, they will be released before tonight ends.

Q. Y Donald Trump o Hillary Clinton, President Castro?

Interpreter. What about your preference for——

[*The moderator called on a Cuban reporter, who began speaking in Spanish. His remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. My greetings for President Obama——

President Castro. Well, I cannot vote in the United States. [*Laughter*]

[*A reporter spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

U.S. Trade Embargo Against Cuba/Human Rights

Q. My question is for President Raúl Castro. My name is Boris Fuentes. I'm from the Cuban TV. President Raúl Castro, you have repeatedly stated, and today once again, that we must learn to coexist in a civilized manner with our differences. Could you broaden this concept at this historical moment that we are living in?

And then, I have a brief question for President Obama. President Obama, could U.S. Government give more space to eliminate U.S. blockade during your mandate so that another generation of Cubans would not have to suffer this economic and commercial blockade against Cuba?

President Castro. The first question was for me. Please repeat your question, because I couldn't hear well.

[*The reporter spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. You have said repeatedly that we must learn to coexist in a civilized manner with our differences.

President Castro. Well, President Obama himself has referred to that. We have given the first steps—many for being the first steps. And we must continue giving these steps. And I'm sure that we will be able to coexist peacefully in an environment of mutual cooperation as we are doing already in many fields for the benefit of both countries and for the benefit of other countries as we have already done, in Haiti, when the cholera—and in Africa with the Ebola. That is the future of mankind if we want to save the human species. Though the water grows and—or the level of water grows and the island may become smaller.

That is all. You are making too much—too many questions to me. I think questions are—should be directed to President Obama.

President Obama. I've got—[*inaudible*]. So we have administratively already made a number of modifications on the embargo. I referred to a number of them in my opening statement. And we've actually been fairly aggressive in exercising as much flexibility as we can, given that the law putting the embargo in place has not been repealed by Congress. There may be some technical aspects of the embargo that we can still make adjustments on, depending on problems as they arise.

So, for example, the issue around the dollar and the need to make modifications in terms of how the embargo was implemented to encourage, rather than discourage reforms that the Cuban Government itself is willing to engage in and to facilitate greater trade and commerce, that is something that grew out of the dialogue between our governments, and we have made appropriate adjustments to it. It will take some time for commercial banks to understand the new rules, but we actually think that this is an area where we can improve current circumstances.

But I'll be honest with you that the list of things that we can do administratively is growing shorter and the bulk of changes that have to be made with respect to the embargo are now going to rely on Congress making changes.

I've been very clear about the interest in getting that done before I leave. Frankly, Congress is not as productive as I would like during a—Presidential election years. But the fact that we have such a large congressional delegation with Democrats and Republicans with us

is an indication that there is growing interest inside of Congress for lifting the embargo.

As I just indicated in my earlier answer, how quickly that happens will, in part, depend on whether we can bridge some of our differences around human rights issues. And that's why the dialogue, I think, is so important. It sends a signal that at least there's engagement between the two countries on these matters. Okay?

I—now, I promised the President I would take one more question. Andrea Mitchell of NBC. Andrea, if you can get the mike.

U.S. Trade Embargo Against Cuba/Human Rights

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Do you feel, after your meetings today, that you have made enough progress to even accelerate the pace and that the Cuban Government is able to move quickly enough so that the changes that you have made through these technical adjustments to the embargo will be permanent, cannot be reversed by the next President? And what advice have you given to President Castro about the ability of having the blockade, the embargo lifted? Because he has said again today, this is a continuous issue which is blocking progress——

President Obama. Right.

Q. ——from their standpoint.

And you said the conversations about human rights were frank and candid and that you want to move forward. But even as you were arriving, there were dramatic arrests of peaceful protests, the Ladies in White. What signal does that send? Can you have civilized coexistence at the same time you have such profound disagreements about the very definitions of what human rights means, as President Castro expressed today?

And for President Castro, for many of us, it's remarkable to hear you speak about all these subjects. Could you tell us what you see in the future? You—President Obama has 9 months remaining. You have said you would be stepping down in 2018. What is the future of our two countries, given the different definitions and the different interpretations of profound issues like democracy and human rights? Thank you.

President Obama. Good. Well, Andrea, I—the embargo is going to end. When, I can't be entirely sure, but I believe it will end. And the path that we're on will continue beyond my administration. The reason is logic. The reason is that what we did for 50 years did not serve our interests or the interests of the Cuban people. And as I said when we made the announcement about normalization of relations, if you keep on doing something over and over again for 50 years and it doesn't work, it might make sense to try something new.

And that's what we've done. And the fact that there has been strong support not just inside of Congress, not just among the American people, but also among the Cuban people indicates that this is a process that should and will continue.

Having said that, lifting the embargo requires the votes of a majority in Congress, and maybe even more than a majority in the Senate. And as I indicated to President Castro, two things, I think, will help accelerate the pace of bringing the embargo to an end. The first is, to the degree that we can take advantage of the existing changes that we've already made and we see progress, that will help to validate this change in policy.

So, for example, we have said that it is no longer a restriction on U.S. companies to invest in helping to build Internet and broadband infrastructure inside of Cuba. It is not against U.S. law, as it's been interpreted by the administration. If we start seeing those kinds of commercial deals taking place and Cubans are benefiting from greater access to the Internet—and when I go to the entrepreneurship meeting later this afternoon, I understand that we're going to meet some young Cubans who are already getting trained and are facile in using the Internet and interested in startups—that builds a constituency for ending the embargo. If we build on the work that we're doing in agriculture and you start seeing more U.S. farmers interacting with Cuban farmers and there's more exports and imports, that builds a constituency, and the possibility of ending the embargo increases. So, hopefully, taking advantage of what we've already done will help.

And the second area, which we've already discussed extensively, is the issue of human rights. People are still concerned about that inside of Cuba. Now, keep in mind, I've got fierce disagreements with the Chinese around human rights. I'll be going to Vietnam later this year; I have deep disagreements with them as well. When we first visited Burma, people questioned whether we should be traveling there because of longstanding human rights violations in our view. And the approach that I've taken has been that if I engage frankly, clearly, stating what our beliefs are, but also being clear that we can't force change on any particular country—ultimately, it has to come from within—then that is going to be a more useful strategy than the same kinds of rigid disengagement that for 50 years did nothing.

I guess, ultimately, what this comes down to, Andrea, is I have faith in people. I think that if you meet Cubans here and Cubans meet Americans and they're meeting and talking and interacting and doing business together and going to school together and learning from each other, then they'll recognize people are people. And, in that context, I believe that change will occur.

Q. President Castro——

President Obama. Okay, now I'm done, but *Señor Presidente,* I think Andrea had a question for you just about your vision. It's up to you. He did say he was only going to take one question and I was going to take two. But I leave it up to you if you want to address that question.

Q. Por favor.

President Obama. Andrea's—[*laughter*]—she's one of our most esteemed journalists in America, and I'm sure she'd appreciate just a short, brief answer.

President Castro. Andrea——

Q. Mr. President.

President Castro. The other day, I asked a question to our Foreign Minister, Andrea. But there is a program here to be fulfilled. I know that if I stay here, you will make 500 questions. I said that I was going to answer one. Well, I answered one and a half. President Obama has already helped me out with the answer here, Andrea.

Well, Andrea, I was reading here something, I think, about human rights, but I'm going to make the question to you now. In—there are 40—there are 61 international instruments recognized. How many countries in the world comply with all the human rights and civil rights that have been included in these 61 instruments? What country complies with them all? Do you know how many? I do. None.

None, whatsoever. Some countries comply some rights; others comply others. And we are among these countries. Out of these 61 instruments, Cuba has complied with 47 of these human rights instruments. There are countries that may comply with more, those that comply with less.

I think human rights issue should not be politicized. That is not correct. If that is a purpose, that we will stay the same way. Like, for example, for Cuba, that does not fulfill all the rights. Do you think there's any other more sacred right than the right to health so that billions of children don't die just for the lack of a vaccine or a drug or a medicament? For example, do you agree with the right to free education for all those born anywhere in the world or in any country? I think many countries don't think this is a human right. In Cuba, all childrens are born in a hospital, and they are registered that same day, because when mothers are in advanced pregnancy, they are—they go to hospitals days before, many days before delivery so that all children are born in hospitals. It doesn't matter if they live in faraway places or in mountains or hills. We have many other rights: a right to health, the right to education.

Do you—and this is my last example that I will mention. Do you think that for equal work, men get better paid than women just for the fact of being women? Well, in Cuba, womens get same pay for same work. I can give you many, many examples, so I don't think—we cannot use the argument of human rights for political confrontation. That is not fair. It's not correct.

I'm not saying that it's not honest. It's part of confrontations, of course. But let us work so

that we can all comply with all human rights. It's like—talking about pride, I'm going to end here because there is a commitment that we should end in time. It's not correct to ask me about political prisoners in general. Please give me the name of a political prisoner.

Moderator. And I think with this—is enough. We have concluded. Thank you for your participation.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at approximately 2:05 p.m. in the Palace of the Revolution. In his remarks, President Obama referred to Jaime Lucas Cardinal Ortega y Alamino, Archbishop of San Cristobal de la Habana; former President Fidel Castro Ruz of Cuba; former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in her capacity as a Democratic Presidential candidate; and Donald J. Trump, chairman and chief executive officer, Trump Organization, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. President Castro and the moderator spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks to Entrepreneurs and a Question-and-Answer Session in Havana
March 21, 2016

The President. Thank you. *Muchas gracias.* Please, everybody have a seat. *Buenas tardes.*

Let me begin by thanking our hosts. This is my very first visit to a Cuban *cervecería.* I hear they've got some great *pollo, Moros y Cristianos,* and of course, *cerveza.* But today we're here to work.

So I want to thank all of you for being part of this unprecedented event: the Cuban Government, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the new U.S.-Cuba Business Council. I'm also want to express my appreciation because we are joined on this trip by nearly 40 Members of Congress, as well as some of America's top business leaders and innovators who are eager to invest in Cuba and its people. And most importantly, I want to welcome all the extraordinary entrepreneurs, men and women who are here from across Cuba.

Now, I'm not here to give a big speech. I'm going to do that tomorrow. What I really want to do is hear from you and have a conversation about what we can achieve together. But I do want to begin by stepping back and talking about the forces and hopes that bring us together here today.

In many ways, the history of Cuba can be understood through the labor of the Cuban people. For centuries under colonial rule and then during decades of American involvement, the toil of the Cuban people was often used to enrich others as opposed to the people who were doing the work. And then, for much of the past half century, it was virtually impossible for Cubans to operate their own businesses. But in recent years, that's begun to change. To its credit, the Cuban Government has adopted some reforms. Cuba is welcoming more foreign investment. Cubans can now buy and sell property, and today, many Cubans own their own homes and apartments. It's easier for Cubans to travel, to buy a cell phone, for farmers to start cooperatives, and for a family to start their own business.

Now, the United States has been proud to help. Shortly after I took office, we said that Cuban Americans could send unlimited remittances to their families here in Cuba. And we allowed Cuban Americans to visit more often. Across this island, Cubans have used those remittances often to start businesses. And when Cuban Americans come visit, they often bring supplies and materials. We also made it easier for Cuban entrepreneurs to import and to export. And since we've made it easier to travel to Cuba, a lot more Americans are visiting the island. You may have noticed. [*Laughter*]

So the Cuban economy is beginning to change, and just look at the results. Groups like Cuba Emprende are training a new generation of entrepreneurs. Today, about half a million Cubans—including some of you—are proud *cuentapropistas*, running your own restaurants, cafes, beauty salons, barber shops, or working as artists,

seamstresses, and taxi drivers. Your businesses now employ about one-third of the Cuban workforce. With help from services like Airbnb, more Americans are staying at your *casas particulares* and eating at your *paladares*—like my family did last night. That food was really good, even if my Spanish is not that great. [*Laughter*]

Those of you who run your own business knows what this means. You can earn a little more money for your family. You can provide more for your children. And then, there's the pride that comes from creating something new and improving the lives of those around you. And that's the power of entrepreneurship. It's about self-determination, the opportunity to forge your own future. It's the belief that even if you don't have much—maybe just a kitchen or a sewing machine or a car—if you're willing to work hard, you can make your own way and improve your lively—your situation in life for the next generation. It's the spirit of youth: talented and driven, daring young people like so many of you ready to make your mark on the world.

It's an investment in the future, because, as we've seen in America, businesses that start small—even in a garage—can grow into some of the world's most successful companies and change the way we work and the way we live and connect with each other. That's the spirit of entrepreneurship. And that's what we're encouraging here today. Because Cuba's economic future—its ability to create more jobs and a growing middle class and meet the aspirations of the Cuban people—depends on growth in the private sector, as well as government action.

And it's not easy. In the United States, we work to help entrepreneurs and small businesses get the resources they need because it can be a struggle to get a new venture off the ground. Around the world, we help young people and entrepreneurs access training and skills to put their ideas into action. And here today, you're talking about the challenges you face as entrepreneurs in Cuba.

Now, many of the changes that our two countries have already announced, including today, will help you to meet some of those challenges. More Americans coming to Cuba means more customers for your businesses. More Americans using the dollar will mean that they will spend more as well. There will be more channels for you to import supplies and equipment. More Americans will be able to buy your arts, crafts, food, Cuban-origin software, as well as, of course, Cuban rum and cigars. [*Laughter*]

We also know that, around the world, entrepreneurs flourish when there's an environment that encourages their success. When professionals like architects and engineers and lawyers are allowed to start their own businesses as well. When entrepreneurs can get loans from banks, capital to start and expand their businesses; and then, we need wholesale markets where you can buy supplies. And when there's a single currency and modern infrastructure so you can get your goods to market and import supplies. And perhaps most importantly, when everybody has a chance to succeed, including women and Afro-Cubans. These are all areas where the United States hopes to be a partner as Cuba moves forward.

And I can tell you, one of the reasons I'm so confident in the potential of the Cuban people is because you have some important advantages. Your commitment to education and very high literacy rates, that gives you an enormous advantage in the 21st century. That's been an investment that has been made here in Cuba. Your ingenuity—who else could keep *almendrones* running all these years? [*Laughter*] You've got more than 300 million potential American customers and one of the world's most dynamic cities, Miami, right next door. And you have more than 2 million talented, successful Cuban Americans, some of whom joined me on this trip, ready to invest in you and help pursue your dreams, and have deep family commitments and deep roots in Cuban culture. So I'm absolutely convinced, if just given a chance, more Cubans can succeed right here at home, in the Cuba that you love.

So I'm here today to say that America wants to be your partner. Around this visit, American companies are moving ahead with new commercial deals. GE is going to sell more products

here, from aviation to energy technology. CleBer will be the first U.S. company to build a factory here in more than 50 years; they're going to build tractors for Cuban farmers. Starwood will become the first U.S. hotel that operates here in nearly 60 years, and Marriott plans to come as well, and they'll help train Cubans in the hospitality industry. The first Carnival cruise is expected to pull into Havana in May. And I will keep saying it every chance I get: One of the best ways to help the Cuban people succeed and improve their lives would be for the U.S. Congress to lift the embargo once and for all. And you know—[*applause*].

Here today, we're doing even more to empower Cuban entrepreneurs. I know you've been networking with each other and potential American partners. Innovators in business, like Airbnb's Brian Chesky, are sharing the lessons that they've learned. We've got a "shark" here named Daymond John. For those of you who don't know, there's a show in America called "Shark Tank," which is an outstanding show where, on television, young entrepreneurs bring their ideas and present them, and they try to get some financing right there on the air. [*Laughter*] And it's a fun show to watch. Julie Hanna supports entrepreneurs all over the world with microfinancing. So give them your best pitch. They just might bite—[*laughter*]—and decide to invest.

We're also announcing some new commitments today. As part of our Young Leaders in the Americas Initiative, we're going to welcome up to 15 young Cuban entrepreneurs to the United States to help them get the training and skills to grow their own business. For the first time, we'll welcome Cubans to our annual Global Entrepreneurship Summit, which I'll host in Silicon Valley later this year. And later this year, our Small Business Administrator, Maria Contreras-Sweet, who is here today—where's Maria? There she is. She's going to lead a delegation of business leaders here to promote more entrepreneurship in Cuba.

And we also want to help connect more Cuban entrepreneurs to the Internet. Some are here today, including Yon Gutiérrez, who designed AlaMesa, an app to connect Cubans to restaurants, and InfoMed, connecting doctors and scientists. More Cubans are going online at Wi-Fi hotspots, but still, very few Cubans have Internet across—Internet access. Although, I just learned that my skit with Pánfilo got 2 million hits here in Cuba, so that—[*laughter*]—I think anybody with Internet access paid attention here.

And—but in terms of Internet action—access, even those who have it often are using old dial-up connections that can be expensive and slow. I don't even remember the sound of the phone when it went——

[*At this point, the President imitated the sound of a dial-up Internet connection. He then continued his remarks as follows.*]

——you know, the—so new technology has come, and we need to bring it to Cuba. "If we had Internet" one Cuban entrepreneur said, "we could really take off."

So America wants to help you take off. And Verizon will help deliver direct landline phone connections between Cuba and the United States. Cisco has announced it will help Cuban students develop their IT skills. The American high-tech firm Stripe is partnering with Merchise Startup Circle here in Havana to help Cubans start ventures and do business online.

So the bottom line is this: We believe in the Cuban people. We believe in artists like Idania del Río, who designs and illustrates her own goods—"99-percent Cuban design," she calls it. We believe in merchants like Sandra Lidice Aldama, who says, "One of the most important things in the Cuban nature is perseverance, optimism, and our capacity to find a solution to any obstacle in the way." We believe in the entrepreneur who said, "I think with these changes in Cuba there's no turning back." And another who said, "This opens us up to the world." And one who also said, "Just give us the chance."

Just give us the chance. Well, as your friend and as your partner, the United States of America wants to help you get that chance. And we're so grateful that we're off to this outstanding start at this event here today. *Muchas gracias.* Thank you.

Thank you very much. Thank you. Now, as I said, I didn't want to just talk, I want to also hear from you. So I've asked to join me one of our outstanding journalists in the United States, an entrepreneur herself who works to empower girls through education. She is a proud Cuban American who, on this visit, has brought her children to Cuba to meet their cousins for the first time. Please give her a big round of applause—Soledad O'Brien.

Starfish Media Group LLC Founder and Chief Executive Officer Soledad O'Brien. So welcome, everyone. My name is Soledad O'Brien, and I'm a journalist, as the President said. And I'm also a Cuban American. My mother grew up not very far from here, in Habana Vieja. And so it's not only nice to be back, but it's great to be able to bring my children here for the first time.

I'm also an entrepreneur. I run a small business that employs nine people full-time. So I know very well the joys and the struggles of running your own business. And I'm excited to be here today to moderate a discussion: to talk to several businesspeople, some people who work in the private sector and others who work in the state sector, to discuss some of the opportunities to improve business and also improve cooperation between Cuba and the United States.

So I'm going to ask the people that I call on to stand and talk for just a couple of moments about your business. And if you have a question for the President, we would love to hear it.

So we'll begin with Gilberto "Papito" Valladares. He's a small-business owner. He is a barber. He's also a community organizer. Welcome.

Small Businesses

Barber Gilberto Valladares. Good afternoon. Mr. President, my name is Gilberto Valladares. Everybody calls me by my nickname, "Papito." I'm a bald barber and a dreamer. I'd like to share with you my vision, my personal vision. I am also from Old Havana. I love Old Havana. We have that in common.

In '99, I made a major decision in my life to become a private self-employed people. At the time, 95 percent of barbers worked for the state. Now 95 percent of them are private operators, meaning that something is happening in Cuban society. It is a very important moment for me. I know that the historical moment of committing the private sector with society is tomorrow, and that's what's been happening in my community. I live in the *callejón de los peluqueros,* or barbers' street. I do like barber's work. That's why they talk about that *callejón,* or alley.

Three years ago, on that street, we only had one self-employed person, myself. Today, we are talking in terms of 97 people who are self-employed, including owners and workers. And this has helped us to promote a dynamic, I'd like to share with you, as to how my community has been creating a chain of economic benefits and also a chain of social benefits. I am convinced that social benefits make economic benefits even more greater. When you work in a microcompany and you work for the future of society, that's where the future of society lies.

The person—crisis of moral—of values of economics, that's why we pay so much attention to social values. My economic project is also helping another project for young people who want to learn to become barbers. Today, we have 10 deaf girls who are being taught how to be hairdressers so that in the future they can work. I'm so happy because alliances have allowed us to grow. By alliances between—I mean the alliances between the private and state sector, among people, and so on.

I think it is also very important to see how we are creating a synergy, and in the end, we all win. I'll also say it's so important that in the end, the world—I will not be able to fix the world, but I can fix my little piece of land where I live. And I think that a very few "littles" will make a big thing up. Thank you, Victor.

The President. Well, first of all, Papito, I know that my barber is very important to me. And Michelle's hairdresser—if she had to choose between me and her hairdresser, I don't know, it would be a close call. [*Laughter*]

The—but in the United States, a barbershop, a beauty salon, that's oftentimes the

center of the neighborhood and community life, and that's where people meet. And so congratulations on not only starting your business, but also seeing it as a social enterprise that can help to contribute to the well-being of the community as a whole.

What—one of the things we're excited about is the fact that even though it's starting small and you're self-employed, you're now about to build up a business and people can see you as a role model and as an example. The next step obviously is for you potentially to be able to expand. And in the United States—I don't know about barbering here—but in the United States, oftentimes, people start off, they just have one chair in the barbershop, then they get five chairs. Young barbers come in, and initially, they rent a chair from you, but over time, once they've gotten regular customers, maybe they go off and they branch off, and they start their own barbershop. And in that way, you see a number of businesses start to grow, even though it started just from one.

And one of the issues that, hopefully, the *cuentapropista* movement can begin to develop is the capacity to take these small businesses that have just started and begin to expand them. That's not going to happen overnight, but that's part of what we'd like to see encouraged. And I think that that's going to require government feeling comfortable with that process, but it's also going to require entrepreneurs like you, as role models, so that people can see how successful it's been.

I will say, there was an interesting conversation that I had with President Castro around this issue, and I know that U.S. companies will relate to this, because he pointed out that as people start getting more of their own income, owning their own property, starting their own businesses, the question starts coming up about paying taxes. [*Laughter*] And President Castro pointed out, rightfully, that nobody likes paying taxes, especially if they're not used to paying taxes. And I assured him that was a universal trait. [*Laughter*] That's true in America, just as much as it is in the United States.

But that gives you a sense of how some of these institutions are going to have to evolve over time because they're still relatively new. But certainly, these are the kinds of initiatives that will start building new habits and new possibilities for people throughout your country.

So congratulations. If I hadn't just gotten a haircut, I'd stop by your shop. [*Laughter*]

Ms. O'Brien. The next person I'd like to introduce is Idania del Río, and she's a graphic designer. And she has been in the past part of an exchange program to the United States.

Small Businesses/Trade

Clandestina Cofounder Idania del Río. Thank you, very much. Good afternoon. I am Ania Río. I am a designer, illustrator. And together with two incredibly talented women, Leire Fernández, we founded Clandestina, which is a design brand intending to define work by as done by Cuban young designers and, in general, to have a bigger design market in Havana to begin with. So we are trying to establish a chain between creation, production, and sales for the benefit of Cuban designers.

The concept of—behind Clandestina's work—Clandestina's is to change the concept of Cuban souvenir idea. We have products like rum and tobacco and cigars, which are practically commodities, but there is a whole market of new products from new initiatives of creation which are not so well established as those products. And design is a quite interesting field in any modern society where much value can be generated for society itself.

Clandestina's began a year ago. What started as a T-shirt shop for—[*inaudible*]—by forming, has become a project with 14 employees, and it is creating over 25 products. So we are very, very happy—most of all, our girls, which is also very cool. And thanks to some things that have been happening—we have been invited to participate in WEAmerica, which is a State Department project. [*Inaudible*]—by America, and because of those things of life, we entered the Columbia Business School. So we've been having business training, and that's essential for us. That has changed our lives and the way we think of our own project, which began as a project and now is a company. We do have many expectations for the future and for

what we can do with young people in our township in Old Havana also.

Thank you very much.

Ms. O'Brien. Idania, May I ask you a question? *Qué necesitas?* What would you like to happen between Cuba and the United States that could be helpful to you and the young women that you serve?

Ms. del Río. Well, basically, what has been discussed here. Specific regulations, information about those regulations, what will happen with imports and exports, what will happen with Cubans as to whether they might be having companies in the United States or selling their products there. Could they trade online? And well, that state—Cuban state information and U.S. Government information would be valuable for us. It is information what what we need most, I think.

The President. The—well, I need some information on where I can buy a couple of T-shirts. So—[*laughter*]. Did you bring some samples? I'm not going to take yours. The—but no, no, no. We'll see if we can get a couple. I think Malia and Sasha might want a couple. And I still have some pesos to spend before I leave.

But I tell you, the—you're absolutely right about the need to make sure that young people who have ideas are not restricted to just the traditional exports where you're not that high up on the value chain. And this is true around the world, including in the United States. You have global markets; they're competitive. If all you're doing is selling commodities, then it's very hard to spur significant economic growth, and you're also vulnerable in the world marketplace if there's a downturn in the economy and people need less raw materials.

So if China's economy slows and suddenly they're not buying as much oil or as much minerals, or what have you, then suddenly, the economy of that country is very vulnerable. And so you want a diversified economy, and you want to make sure that skills, design, software, products of intellectual work and not just raw materials or commodities, that that becomes a critical part of the overall economy.

Now, Cuba already has an example of that in its outstanding medical profession. The doctors and the nurses are essential exports for Cuba because they're highly skilled, they're highly trained. They're at a global standard. And as a consequence, they can sell those services essentially when they work elsewhere in the world. But there's no reason to think that the same ingenuity that exists when it comes to medicine shouldn't be true in fashion as well or in software or in engineering or a whole host of other potential occupations that people provide.

And so you're starting to lead the way. But I'll talk to you afterwards about that T-shirts. [*Laughter*] Yes.

Ms. O'Brien. The next person we'd like to hear from is Brian Chesky. You mentioned him earlier. He is the founder of Airbnb, and they have 2 million listings in 190 countries. Hi, Brian.

Airbnb, Inc./Internet Commerce

Airbnb, Inc., Chief Executive Officer and Cofounder Brian J. Chesky. Thank you, Mr. President. It's an honor to be here. This is a historic week for diplomacy. And I wanted to just talk for a moment about maybe another kind of diplomacy, and that is people-to-people diplomacy. We launched, with your help, 1 year ago. In that period of time, we've had Americans come from all 50 States in the country, and they've stayed with hosts here in Cuba. And we estimate now about 20 percent of all Americans that are staying in Cuba are staying in a home with a Cuba host. What they say is that they come here with 50 years of questions, and they have 3 days to ask them. But I think it's been an amazing experience and an unbelievable story.

We just got the word from the White House that, a day ago, we would allow—we were going to be allowed to have not just Americans stay with Cuban hosts, but guests from all over the world. I mentioned this to a Cuban host, and then she actually started crying. And she explained to me that this would be—allow her to finally be able to complete paying the bills for their family and fix up her home.

I met another host last night, and she said, "We open our doors, we open our hearts, and what we care most about is not just the money we make, but the friendships we make." And they used to say that they had lots of misconceptions about Americans, and it's hard to have misconceptions about Americans when you actually host them in your homes. And the same thing is true with Americans and, I think, people all over the world. I think there's hundreds of thousands of new friendships that are possible if we can bring people together.

The President. That's great. The—I just want to brag on Brian just for one second. First of all, for those Cubans who are not familiar with Brian, you can see how young he is. The company that he started, Airbnb, basically started as an idea with his cofounder, who is also here and—how long ago did you guys start, Brian?

Mr. Chesky. Eight years.

The President. Eight years. And what's the valuation now?

Mr. Chesky. Quite a lot.

The President. Don't be shy.

Mr. Chesky. Twenty-five billion.

The President. Twenty-five billion? With a "b"? Okay. But I use Brian as an example. He's one of our outstanding your entrepreneurs who had an idea and acted on it. And in this global economy, it can take off, if it's a good idea and it's well executed. But I also think Brian is a good example of the power of the Internet and why having an Internet infrastructure is so important. Because essentially, Airbnb is using social media and the Internet in order to create a buyer and a seller and a market that is safe for those buyers and sellers that didn't previously exist. I mean, it used to be if an American or a German or anybody wanted to come to Cuba, they could go to a hotel, and that was it. Now, suddenly, there are thousands of potential sellers of a great experience here in Cuba, and they themselves become smallbusinesspeople.

But it's only possible because somebody in Germany can look up online and see, okay, that's a house, that looks nice, there's a nice picture. I—there's been a good rating of the host. Right? They've found out that when you get there, the room actually looks like the room on the Internet. The person who's inviting somebody into their home, they can check, and they've seen that, okay, the person who's using this has a good credit rating. And if they've stayed at Airbnb before, they haven't completely torn up the house.

And so it's a tool to build trust and allow this transaction to take place. But it's—if you imagine what could be done with broader Internet access and service here, Brian, I think, gives you a good example of the potential that could be unleashed. But it requires an infrastructure and an investment in order to make it work.

Thank you for sharing your story, Brian.

Ms. O'Brien. Up next is Abelardo Alvarez Silva. Mr. Silva. Mr. Silva, I should say, is the president of the Cooperative of Credits and Services, an association of small farmers.

Agriculture

Antero Regalado Cooperative of Credits and Services President Abelardo Alvarez Silva. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman. I'm a farmer, president of a credit and service cooperative, a social and economic unit which has autonomy in its management and covers expenses with the income. There are 192 associates. There's a general assembly, the top organ of the cooperative. It has an area of 638 hectares: 500 are arable land with fruits, grains, et cetera; 28 owners and 25 usufruct. We produce all of our productions, around 9,000 tons. For social consumption, we sell to the population directly. With the industry, we sell seeds and hotels.

One of the positive impacts of our cooperative at the social level, our cooperative takes care of women homes, for age—children with oncological problems. That is the positive impact of the cooperative. We supply them. We are located in Artemisa, Havana Matanzas area. It's a productive area under irrigation, with a system created by farmers with an advanced experience in all the crops. However, we have not been able to find all the potentials because of the absence of new technology. Our machineries are very backward, irrigation system

that prevents us from finding the development and the top productivity of our work.

What is our message? To give us an opportunity to meet two objectives: one, to produce food for the people more efficiently; and second, in the future—in the immediate future, to contribute to the world. And we continue with our land, growing it and harvesting it.

The President. Let me just ask you a quick question—*pregunta.* What's your—you said you grow grain and fruit. Yes, let's get a translation. My Spanish is—[*laughter*]. Yes. I'm just curious, first of all, what are the products that you've been most successful in growing? What's your major seller? And also, when it comes to equipment, what are the specific things that you're looking for at this point? Is it basics, like tractors, or is it more sophisticated irrigation systems? What are the main needs of the cooperative at this point?

Mr. Alvarez. We have several crops. We're specialists in that. We produce potatoes, bananas, and sweet potatoes. Those are the most productive items. And in vegetables, we're highly producers in carrots, tomatoes, beet root. They are the main ones, although we grow them all. And fruits: guava, papaya. Those are our main crops. Fifty percent are vegetables, 35 in tubers, 15 in grains, and 5 percent in fruits.

When I spoke about the attention of the equipment, we need machinery, irrigation machinery. Our machinery is very old, and no spare parts do we have. Those parts that we need today, it's hard to buy them. So the irrigation system are through furrows, and that doesn't—that's not used anymore. It brings about erosion. And we have substituted with organic maneuver. But still, we're under the productivity.

When we have all that machinery, things will be done in less time, less expensive. Not so much use of water. Better protection of the soil—to find the top productivity of the land. Also, the resources which we need are indispensable, and sometimes, they don't come. Because of the many costs, as you know, we don't receive those inputs at the time required and then when we don't really need it. Thank you.

The President. My Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, joined me in this delegation. I don't know if he's here today. But I know that he's been meeting with Cuban Government officials about how we can accelerate cooperation between U.S. farmers and Cuban farmers. We have programs all around the world that are designed to advance technologies, specifically for small farmers, not just for big farmers. Because the truth of the matter is, the U.S. agricultural industry, which is the largest in the world, oftentimes may have systems that are not perfectly adapted to smaller-scale cooperative farming. On the other hand, what you're seeing in terms of agriculture in the United States is a greater and greater interest in what's called organic farming: less inputs, less chemicals, fewer monocrops, and more vegetables and fruits that can go directly to the table. And this is part of the First Lady's emphasis on healthier eating.

And the fact that Cuba is so close to the United States means that if you develop fruits and vegetables here, the ability to ship them and immediately get to markets where they can be purchased could—would be something that could make a big difference in terms of farm incomes here in Cuba.

So this is an area where, again, it's not going to happen overnight, but our hope is, is that as relationships between the two countries advance and develop, hopefully, we'll be getting you some new equipment sometime in the future.

Mr. Alvarez. Muchas gracias.

The President. Muchas gracias.

Ms. O'Brien. Dr. Miriam Portuondo-Sao is with the health system. She's a specialist in the genetics clinic. Welcome.

Medical Research/Cuba-U.S. Medical Collaboration

Ministry of Health clinician Miriam Portuondo-Sao. Welcome. For us, it's a pleasure to share with you a little bit on the experience in the field of medical cooperation. I am doctor—a doctor in medical science, especially in clinical genetics, and professor of the university. And we have had the opportunity to share the

medical collaboration, the international one. As you know, it reaches 138 other countries. Over 3,700 health professionals have participated.

And this field of medical collaboration, there are several lines—several fields. And you know the recent experience we had and the struggle against the Ebola experience in the countries of Western Africa. From there on, we have had other working lines in which we have cooperated, like the miracle operation that has returned vision to over 2 million people in the rest of the world. We have a special program; it's research and action of disability. We have already one experience of handicap people, which we had in our country. We want to collaborate with the ALBA countries, and this research we want it to be conveyed. Once we research each person with all the disabilities that show up, then we know the true reality of that person. And in those sectors that should be taken care of in a personalized manner, we provide them with a medical special program. And other programs have been developed, like the development of genetics. And community genetics, rehabilitation, those are programs which go from the research and action.

We also have the possibility to establish collaboration lines, joint ones. And we have possibilities that the health medical services have 17 programs. They were conceived in the country. And we can receive patients if they are sent. And we have lines, like attention and the certification of addiction, lines which are already dealing with very specific matters for certain regions, and where we could establish other fields of cooperation: research, academic services, development, clinical trials, especially on cancer, for instance, that could contribute in this link with the pharmaceutical industry. Vaccines, which have already been tried, that shall improve the quality and prolong the life of patients that are limited at this moment. We're willing to cooperate in all these spheres. Thank you.

Ms. O'Brien. She mentioned collaboration, and I'd love to know what could the United States and doctors and the medical profession here in Cuba be working on together.

The President. Well, as I said, Cuba has world-class doctors and nurses. And the field that the doctor mentioned, the transformation that's taking place as we start understanding genetics, mapping the human genome, understanding at a cellular level the nature of diseases, means that we're in a position in the very near future to start personalizing treatments, because a cancer cell that develops in me may not be the same as one that develops in you and may require different treatments. But that's just one example of a wide range of areas where collaboration is—could be very fruitful.

So, with the Cuban Government, we have agreed to establish and develop over time more and more scientific and research collaborations in the medical area. And one of the things that I've always believed is, is that knowledge should be disseminated everywhere. And the basis for scientific advancement is the sharing of information and data sets and our ability to test hypotheses and discoveries and treatments and diagnoses across borders. Because ultimately, regardless of our political and economic systems and our differences, the diseases are the same because we're the same creatures. And we want to make sure that if there's a cure or a potential line of research here in Cuba, that that can go global, in the same way that if in the United States, we find a potential ability to diagnose or treat, that we can spread that around the world.

One specific example that I mentioned to President Castro today is the work we're doing on Zika. It's just not Zika; it's also dengue and some other mosquito-borne diseases that are becoming more common because people are traveling more. Many of these are actually fairly simple viruses. But it's just because they used to be very isolated, the major drug companies and scientific research didn't devote a lot of attention to them, and now suddenly, they're spreading very quickly. The faster we can get diagnoses and potential vaccines, the more we can help guard against what appear to be some correlations between this disease and abnormalities in newborns.

But you're seeing this spread so fast across the Americas, this is a natural place where the U.S. and Cuba should be working together. Because it really doesn't matter whether it's an ALBA country or a U.S. ally, the mosquitos don't care about borders. [*Laughter*] They're biting everybody. And the women who are fearful because it may affect their pregnancy, they're not concerned with ideology, they're interested in making sure that their children are protected.

So that's a good, specific, concrete example of how our collaboration can advance.

Ms. O'Brien. Our last speaker is Indhira Sotillo Fernandez. She is the founder of IslaDentro, which is sort of the Yelp of Cuba: business, artist, cultural guide of the Internet. Certainly has been challenging here. So why don't you tell us a little bit about your business and how you'd like to see it develop.

Technology

IslaDentro Founder Indhira Sotillo Fernandez. Good afternoon. My name is Indhira. I represent IslaDentro. It's a guide of business for the state and private sector. I am from the private sector, and I think I am an entrepreneur. This was a project that came to my hands almost from the air. It just came to me. And in time, I have been transforming it. We have modified until we have reached to this state. If you want to walk around Havana, you should install it in your phone. It includes everything you need, you require. We have restaurants, cafeterias, beauty parlors, and mechanics of *almandrones,* the old cars. All sorts of services are in that type of guide.

My experience in that work: When I began, I knew nothing about programming. All I do is empiric. I began to design in an empiric way. I have a very good team that backs me and perfectly understands this, and they put it into practice.

Ms. O'Brien. So what are your biggest challenges?

Ms. Sotillo. One, I want to be the guide of Cuba. I want to be the one representing Cuba out, abroad, the guide for all those who come here and move around, inside the whole island with the application. To become the guide that represents Cuba, abroad especially. And of course, to have thousands and thousands—right now I have hundreds of active profiles in the application, and thousands would be much better.

The President. So the—what's going to be the one or two things that are going to be most important to you as you develop your business over the next several years, and how can the dialogue between the United States and Cuba be most helpful? Is it capital? Is it having access to international markets? Is it making sure that the Internet is widespread? Is it having trained personnel? Is it your knowledge of how to expand your business and make sure that it actually is generating revenue? What are the things that you think are going to be most important to you?

Ms. Sotillo. A little bit of all you have mentioned. A little bit of all we're going to need. Of course, to open up—and if the Internet is opened up, it will be faster so that abroad they will know what we're doing inside and that it will be easier for anyone arriving, any foreigner, coming with information. That is one of the things. Also, to train ourselves better, it would be another of the emergencies to take into account. A little bit of everything you said.

The President. Well, here is the thing I will say, that Malia and Sasha—Malia is soon 18, Sasha is—will soon be 15—if they go anywhere, they don't have a book. [*Laughter*] They don't have maps. Everything is on their phone. And that's true of young people internationally. And so as more and more visitors come to Cuba, I think that the potential for this app is going to be enormous. And so I know that you have the right idea. It's just going to be a matter of execution. And hopefully, with some of the changes that are taking place in terms of government policy and your own drive and some of the work that we're doing, for example, where Cisco is training more people in terms of online skills, and maybe some entrepreneurial advice that we're able to obtain through the exchanges that are taking place between our two countries—when they come here 5 years from now without me,

they'll know how to find the best restaurant and the best music. They'll be going to your app.

So good luck.

Ms. Sotillo. Thank you.

Cuban Economic Development/Cuba-U.S. Relations

Ms. O'Brien. I'll just throw out some questions as well. Where do you think—I mean, clearly, she talked about wanting to learn about entrepreneurship, in addition to capital and all these other things. What do you think is going to be the thing that changes Cuba over the next 2, 3 years that will really help entrepreneurs in this country?

The President. Well, ultimately, it's going to be young people like some of the ones that we've heard who are going to use their own imaginations and ideas to help develop and expand the Cuban economy.

Obviously, the United States has a long history—we were built on entrepreneurship and on market-based principles. And it has produced wealth that's unmatched in the history of the world. I think Cuba, in part because of its history and seeing some of the inequalities that emerged in the old system, have been concerned about what a market-based economy does to the social fabric and to equality and to making sure that the progress that's been made in health care and education, that that's not eroded and you don't start seeing some of the patterns of inequality that existed before coming back.

And I understand those concerns. I will say this, though, that in the 21st century, in a knowledge-based economy, in a global economy, for Cuba to grow, it's going to have to find ways to link itself with that global economy. And that's going to require some reforms internally here in Cuba. And what I said to President Castro was, given some of the history of mistrust between the United States and Cuba, given the fact that our embargo at the moment is still in place, it may be that it's not the United States that is giving them the technical advice they need in terms of how to make some of the changes and reforms in a way that is not overly disruptive. But there are other countries that have done this and made these transitions. There are countries that have a more mixed economy, but that have been able to develop strong entrepreneurs and a business class.

And so Cuba should take ideas, steal ideas from wherever you see something working. Now, my advice would be, don't steal ideas from places where it's not working. [*Laughter*] And there are some economic models that just don't work. And that's not an ideological opinion on my part. That's just the objective reality that there's some economies that have had great difficulty in how they operate, and it gets harder and harder as time goes by.

So I think that some of what's going to have to happen will be internal to Cuba. And that's not going to be determined by the United States, that's going to be determined by the Cuban Government and the Cuban people. What I can say is that the business leaders—the U.S. business leaders who are here and the American people are not interested in Cuba failing. We're interested in Cuba succeeding. We're interested in Cuba being a partner with us.

We're interested in a situation in which businesspeople who are in Miami right now are taking a half-hour, 45-minute flight, or however long it takes, and suddenly, they're in a thriving Cuba where you've got—they're partnering with Cuban businesses. Young people like the ones we've met today, they're developing their own business on their own terms. They may have international partners, but they're not being dictated to. They're, in fact, the ones who are guiding their own models and their own prosperity. That more and more Cubans are seeing the concrete benefits of economic growth, and that that economic leadership, which I believe can be compatible with good education and good health care and equal pay for equal work and all the principles that President Castro talked about at his press conference, that's our hope. That's our desire.

When I initiated the change in policy, one of my arguments was that if something is not working for 50 years, you should stop doing it and try something new. And that applies to

what the United States is doing. That also applies to what Cuba is doing.

And so we both, I think, are in a time when we should be examining new ideas. But the one thing that this gathering and, hopefully, my visit should have communicated is, the Cuban people have nothing to fear from the United States. And I've said to the American people, we have nothing to fear from Cuba. And if we can build that trust and let these young people develop their talents without fear, then I'm confident that the future of both countries and the cooperation between the two countries is going to be very promising.

So thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:29 p.m. at La Cervecería. In his remarks, he referred to Daymond G. John, founder, president, and chief executive officer, FUBU, in his capacity as an investor on ABC's "Shark Tank" reality television program; Julie Hanna, executive chair of the board, Kiva; comedian Luis "Panfilo" Silva; Sandra Lidice Aldama Suarez, owner, D'Brujas soap factory; Sofia, Cecilia, Charles, and Jackson O'Brien, children of Ms. O'Brien; and Nathan Blecharczyk, chief technology officer and cofounder, Airbnb, Inc. Ms. O'Brien referred to her mother, Estela Lucrecia Marquetti y Mendieta. Participants spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at the Gran Teatro de la Habana Alicia Alonso in Havana
March 22, 2016

Thank you. *Muchas gracias.* Thank you so much. Please. Thank you very much.

To President Castro, the people of Cuba, thank you so much for the warm welcome that I have received, that my family have received, and that our delegation has received. It is an extraordinary honor to be here today.

Terrorist Attacks in Brussels, Belgium

Before I begin, please indulge me. I want to comment on the terrorist attacks that have taken place in Brussels. The thoughts and the prayers of the American people are with the people of Belgium. And we stand in solidarity with them in condemning these outrageous attacks against innocent people. We will do whatever is necessary to support our friend and ally, Belgium, in bringing to justice those who are responsible. And this is yet another reminder that the world must unite, we must be together, regardless of nationality or race or faith, in fighting against the scourge of terrorism. We can—and we will—defeat those who threaten the safety and security of people all around the world.

Cuba-U.S. Relations

To the Government and the people of Cuba, I want to thank you for the kindness that you've shown to me and Michelle, Malia, Sasha, my mother-in-law Marian.

"Cultivo una rosa blanca." [*Laughter*] In his famous—[*applause*]—in his most famous poem, José Martí made this offering of friendship and peace to both his friend and his enemy. Today, as the President of the United States of America, I offer the Cuban people *el saludo de paz.*

Havana is only 90 miles from Florida, but to get here we had to travel a great distance, over barriers of history and ideology, barriers of pain and separation. The blue waters beneath Air Force One once carried American battleships to this island: to liberate, but also to exert control over Cuba. Those waters also carried generations of Cuban revolutionaries to the United States, where they built support for their cause. And that short distance has been crossed by hundreds of thousands of Cuban exiles, on planes and makeshift rafts, who came to America in pursuit of freedom and opportunity, sometimes leaving behind everything they owned and every person that they loved.

Like so many people in both of our countries, my lifetime has spanned a time of isolation between us. The Cuban Revolution took place the same year that my father came to the United States from Kenya. The Bay of Pigs took place the year that I was born. The next year, the entire world held its breath, watching our two countries, as humanity came as close as we ever have to the horror of nuclear war. As the decades rolled by, our governments settled into a seemingly endless confrontation, fighting battles through proxies. In a world that remade itself time and again, one constant was the conflict between the United States and Cuba. I have come here to bury the last remnant of the cold war in the Americas. I have come here to extend the hand of friendship to the Cuban people.

Now, I want to be clear: The differences between our governments over these many years are real, and they are important. I'm sure President Castro would say the same thing. I know, because I've heard him address those differences at length. [*Laughter*] But before I discuss those issues, we also need to recognize how much we share. Because in many ways, the United States and Cuba are like two brothers who have been estranged for many years, even as we share the same blood.

We both live in a new world, colonized by Europeans. Cuba, like the United States, was built in part by slaves brought here from Africa. Like the United States, the Cuban people can trace their heritage to both slaves and slave owners. We've welcomed, both, immigrants who came a great distance to start new lives in the Americas.

Over the years, our cultures have blended together. Dr. Carlos Finlay's work in Cuba paved the way for generations of doctors, including Walter Reed, who drew on Dr. Finlay's work to help combat yellow fever. Just as Martí wrote some of his most famous words in New York, Ernest Hemingway made a home in Cuba and found inspiration in the waters of these shores. We share a national pastime—*la pelota*—and later today our players will compete on the same Havana field that Jackie Robinson played on before he made his Major League debut. And it is said that our greatest boxer, Muhammad Ali, once paid tribute to a Cuban that he could never fight, saying that he would only be able to reach a draw with the great Cuban, Teofilo Stevenson.

So even as our governments became adversaries, our people continued to share these common passions, particularly as so many Cubans came to America. In Miami or Havana, you can find places to dance the cha-cha-cha or the salsa and eat *ropa vieja.* People in both of our countries have sung along with Celia Cruz or Gloria Estefan and now listen to reggaeton or Pitbull. [*Laughter*] Millions of our people share a common religion, a faith that I paid tribute to at the Shrine of our Lady of Charity in Miami, a peace that Cubans find in La Cachita.

For all of our differences, the Cuban and American people share common values in their own lives: a sense of patriotism and a sense of pride—a lot of pride; a profound love of family; a passion for our children, a commitment to their education. And that's why I believe our grandchildren will look back on this period of isolation as an aberration, as just one chapter in a longer story of family and of friendship.

But we cannot and should not ignore the very real differences that we have about how we organize our governments, our economies, and our societies. Cuba has a one-party system; the United States is a multiparty democracy. Cuba has a socialist economic model; the United States is an open market. Cuba has emphasized the role and rights of the state; the United States is founded upon the rights of the individual.

Despite these differences, on December 17, 2014, President Castro and I announced that the United States and Cuba would begin a process to normalize relations between our countries. Since then, we have established diplomatic relations and opened Embassies. We've begun initiatives to cooperate on health and in agriculture, education and law enforcement. We've reached agreements to restore direct flights and mail service. We've expanded commercial ties and increased the capacity of Americans to travel and do business in Cuba.

And these changes have been welcomed, even though there are still opponents to these policies. Still, many people on both sides of this debate have asked: Why now? Why now? There is one simple answer: What the United States was doing was not working. We have to have the courage to acknowledge that truth. A policy of isolation designed for the cold war made little sense in the 21st century. The embargo was only hurting the Cuban people instead of helping them. And I've always believed in what Martin Luther King, Jr., called "the fierce urgency of now." We should not fear change, we should embrace it.

That leads me to a bigger and more important reason for these changes: *Creo en el pueblo Cubano*—I believe in the Cuban people. This is not just a policy of normalizing relations with the Cuban Government. The United States of America is normalizing relations with the Cuban people.

And today I want to share with you my vision of what our future can be. I want the Cuban people—especially the young people—to understand why I believe that you should look to the future with hope. Not the false promise which insists that things are better than they really are, or the blind optimism that says all your problems can go away tomorrow; hope that is rooted in the future that you can choose and that you can shape and that you can build for your country.

I'm hopeful because I believe that the Cuban people are as innovative as any people in the world. In a global economy, powered by ideas and information, a country's greatest asset is its people. In the United States, we have a clear monument to what the Cuban people can build: it's called Miami. Here in Havana, we see that same talent in *cuentapropistas,* cooperatives, and old cars that still run. *El Cubano inventa del aire.* [*Laughter*]

Cuba has an extraordinary resource: a system of education which values every boy and every girl. And in recent years, the Cuban Government has begun to open up to the world and to open up more space for that talent to thrive. In just a few years, we've seen how *cuentapropistas* can succeed while sustaining a distinctly Cuban spirit. Being self-employed is not about becoming more like America, it's about being yourself.

Look at Sandra Lidice Aldama, who chose to start a small business. Cubans, she said, can "innovate and adapt without losing our identity. . . . Our secret is not in copying or imitating, but simply being ourselves."

Look at Papito Valladeres, a barber, whose success allowed him to improve conditions in his neighborhood. "I realize I'm not going to solve all of the world's problems," he said. "But if I can solve problems in the little piece of the world where I live, it can ripple across Havana."

That's where hope begins: with the ability to earn your own living and to build something you can be proud of. That's why our policies focus on supporting Cubans, instead of hurting them. That's why we got rid of limits on remittances, so ordinary Cubans have more resources. That's why we're encouraging travel, which will build bridges between our people and bring more revenue to those Cuban small businesses. That's why we've opened up space for commerce and exchanges, so that Americans and Cubans can work together to find cures for diseases and create jobs and open the door to more opportunity for the Cuban people.

As President of the United States, I've called on our Congress to lift the embargo. It is an outdated burden on the Cuban people. It's a burden on the Americans who want to work and do business or invest here in Cuba. It's time to lift the embargo. But even if we lifted the embargo tomorrow, Cubans would not realize their potential without continued change here in Cuba. It should be easier to open a business here in Cuba. A worker should be able to get a job directly with companies who invest here in Cuba. Two currencies shouldn't separate the type of salaries that Cubans can earn. The Internet should be available across the island so that Cubans can connect to the wider world and to one of the greatest engines of growth in human history.

There's no limitation from the United States on the ability of Cuba to take these steps. It's up to you. And I can tell you as a friend that

sustainable prosperity in the 21st century depends on education, health care, and environmental protection. But it also depends on the free and open exchange of ideas. If you can't access information online, if you cannot be exposed to different points of view, you will not reach your full potential. And over time, the youth will lose hope.

I know these issues are sensitive, especially coming from an American President. Before 1959, some Americans saw Cuba as something to exploit, ignored poverty, enabled corruption. And since 1959, we've been shadow boxers in this battle of geopolitics and personalities. I know the history, but I refuse to be trapped by it.

I've made it clear that the United States has neither the capacity nor the intention to impose change on Cuba. What changes come will depend upon the Cuban people. We will not impose our political or economic system on you. We recognize that every country, every people, must chart its own course and shape its own model. But having removed the shadow of history from our relationship, I must speak honestly about the things that I believe, the things that we, as Americans, believe. As Martí said, "Liberty is the right of every man to be honest, to think and to speak without hypocrisy."

So let me tell you what I believe. I can't force you to agree, but you should know what I think. I believe that every person should be equal under the law. Every child deserves the dignity that comes with education and health care and food on the table and a roof over their heads. I believe citizens should be free to speak their mind without fear, to organize, and to criticize their government and to protest peacefully, and that the rule of law should not include arbitrary detentions of people who exercise those rights. I believe that every person should have the freedom to practice their faith peacefully and publicly. And yes, I believe voters should be able to choose their governments in free and democratic elections.

Not everybody agrees with me on this. Not everybody agrees with the American people on this. But I believe those human rights are universal. I believe they are the rights of the American people, the Cuban people, and people around the world.

Now, there's no secret that our governments disagree on many of these issues. I've had frank conversations with President Castro. For many years, he has pointed out the flaws in the American system: economic inequality, the death penalty, racial discrimination, wars abroad. That's just a sample. He has a much longer list. [*Laughter*] But here's what the Cuban people need to understand: I welcome this open debate and dialogue. It's good. It's healthy. I'm not afraid of it.

We do have too much money in American politics. But in America, it's still possible for somebody like me—a child who was raised by a single mom, a child of mixed race who did not have a lot of money—to pursue and achieve the highest office in the land. That's what's possible in America.

We do have challenges with racial bias—in our communities, in our criminal justice system, in our society—the legacy of slavery and segregation. But the fact that we have open debates within America's own democracy is what allows us to get better. In 1959, the year that my father moved to America, it was illegal for him to marry my mother, who was White, in many American States. When I first started school, we were still struggling to desegregate schools across the American South. But people organized, they protested, they debated these issues, they challenged government officials. And because of those protests and because of those debates and because of popular mobilization, I'm able to stand here today as an African American and as President of the United States. That was because of the freedoms that were afforded in the United States that we were able to bring about change.

Now, I'm not saying this is easy. There's still enormous problems in our society. But democracy is the way that we solve them. That's how we got health care for more of our people. That's how we made enormous gains in women's rights and gay rights. That's how we address the inequality that concentrates so much wealth at the top of our society. Because workers can organize and ordinary people have a

voice, American democracy has given our people the opportunity to pursue their dreams and enjoy a high standard of living.

Now, there are still some tough fights. It isn't always pretty, the process of democracy. It's often frustrating. You can see that in the election going on back home. But just stop and consider this fact about the American campaign that's taking place right now. You had two Cuban Americans in the Republican Party, running against the legacy of a Black man who is President, while arguing that they're the best person to beat the Democratic nominee who will either be a woman or a Democratic Socialist. [*Laughter*] Who would have believed that back in 1959? That's a measure of our progress as a democracy.

So here's my message to the Cuban Government and the Cuban people: The ideals that are the starting point for every revolution—America's revolution, Cuba's revolution, the liberation movements around the world—those ideals find their truest expression, I believe, in democracy. Not because American democracy is perfect, but precisely because we're not. And we, like every country, need the space that democracy gives us to change. It gives individuals the capacity to be catalysts to think in new ways and to reimagine how our society should be and to make them better.

And there's already an evolution taking place inside of Cuba, a generational change. Many suggested that I come here and ask the people of Cuba to tear something down, but I'm appealing to the young people of Cuba who will lift something up, build something new. *El futuro de Cuba tiene que estar en las manos del pueblo Cubano.*

And to President Castro, who I appreciate being here today, I wanted you to know, I believe my visit here demonstrates you do not need to fear a threat from the United States. And given your commitment to Cuba's sovereignty and self-determination, I am also confident that you need not fear the different voices of the Cuban people and their capacity to speak and assemble and vote for their leaders. In fact, I'm hopeful for the future because I trust that the Cuban people will make the right decisions. And as you do, I'm also confident that Cuba can continue to play an important role in the hemisphere and around the globe, and my hope is, is that you can do so as a partner with the United States.

We've played very different roles in the world. But no one should deny the service that thousands of Cuban doctors have delivered for the poor and suffering. Last year, American health care workers—and the U.S. military—worked side by side with Cubans to save lives and stamp out Ebola in West Africa. I believe that we should continue that kind of cooperation in other countries.

We've been on the different side of so many conflicts in the Americas. But today, Americans and Cubans are sitting together at the negotiating table, and we are helping the Colombian people resolve a civil war that's dragged on for decades. That kind of cooperation is good for everybody. It gives everyone in this hemisphere hope.

We took different journeys to our support for the people of South Africa in ending apartheid. But President Castro and I could both be there in Johannesburg to pay tribute to the legacy of the great Nelson Mandela. And in examining his life and his words, I'm sure we both realized we have more work to do to promote equality in our own countries, to reduce discrimination based on race in our own countries. And in Cuba, we want our engagement to help lift up the Cubans who are of African descent, who've proven that there's nothing they cannot achieve when given the chance.

We've been a part of different blocs of nations in the hemisphere, and we will continue to have profound differences about how to promote peace, security, opportunity, and human rights. But as we normalize our relations, I believe it can help foster a greater sense of unity in the Americas: *Todos somos Americanos.*

From the beginning of my time in office, I've urged the people of the Americas to leave behind the ideological battles of the past. We are in a new era. I know that many of the issues that I've talked about lack the drama of the past. And I know that part of Cuba's identity is

its pride in being a small island nation that could stand up for its rights and shake the world. But I also know that Cuba will always stand out because of the talent, hard work, and pride of the Cuban people. That's your strength. Cuba doesn't have to be defined by being against the United States, any more than the United States should be defined by being against Cuba. And I'm hopeful for the future because of the reconciliation that's taking place among the Cuban people.

I know that for some Cubans on the island, there may be a sense that those who left somehow supported the old order in Cuba. I'm sure there's a narrative that lingers here which suggests that Cuban exiles ignored the problems of pre-Revolutionary Cuba and rejected the struggle to build a new future. But I can tell you today that so many Cuban exiles carry a memory of painful, and sometimes violent, separation. They love Cuba. A part of them still considers this their true home. That's why their passion is so strong. That's why their heartache is so great. And for the Cuban American community that I've come to know and respect, this is not just about politics. This is about family: the memory of a home that was lost, the desire to rebuild a broken bond, the hope for a better future, the hope for return and reconciliation.

For all of the politics, people are people, and Cubans are Cubans. And I've come here—I've traveled this distance—on a bridge that was built by Cubans on both sides of the Florida Straits. I first got to know the talent and passion of the Cuban people in America. And I know how they have suffered more than the pain of exile; they also know what it's like to be an outsider and to struggle and to work harder to make sure their children can reach higher in America. So the reconciliation of the Cuban people—the children and grandchildren of revolution and the children and grandchildren of exile—that is fundamental to Cuba's future.

You see it in Gloria Gonzales who traveled here in 2013 for the first time after 61 years of separation and was met by her sister Llorca. "You recognized me, but I didn't recognize you," Gloria said after she embraced her sibling. Imagine that, after 61 years.

You see it in Melinda Lopez, who came to her family's old home. And as she was walking the streets, an elderly woman recognized her as her mother's daughter and began to cry. She took her into her home and showed her a pile of photos that included Melinda's baby picture, which her mother had sent 50 years ago. Melinda later said, "So many of us are now getting so much back."

You see it in Cristian Miguel Soler, a young man who became the first of his family to travel here after 50 years. And meeting relatives for the first time, he said, "I realized that family is family no matter the distance between us."

Sometimes, the most important changes start in small places. The tides of history can leave people in conflict and exile and poverty. It takes time for those circumstances to change. But the recognition of a common humanity, the reconciliation of people bound by blood and a belief in one another, that's where progress begins: understanding and listening and forgiveness. And if the Cuban people face the future together, it will be more likely that the young people of today will be able to live with dignity and achieve their dreams right here in Cuba.

The history of the United States and Cuba encompass revolution and conflict; struggle and sacrifice; retribution and, now, reconciliation. It is time, now, for us to leave the past behind. It is time for us to look forward to the future together, *un futuro de esperanza.* And it won't be easy, and there will be setbacks. It will take time. But my time here in Cuba renews my hope and my confidence in what the Cuban people will do. We can make this journey as friends and as neighbors and as family, together. *Si, se puede. Muchas gracias.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to musician Armando C. "Pitbull" Pérez; Sens. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz and Marco A. Rubio, in their capacity as Republican Presidential candidates; former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sen. Bernard Sanders, in their capacity as

Democratic Presidential candidates; Rosa Llorca, who reunited with her sister Gloria Gonzales at the Lambert-St. Louis International Airport on October 22, 2013; Juanita Miranda, an elderly woman who recognized Bedford, MA, resident Melinda Lopez on a visit to her parents' hometown of Caibarién, Cuba, in 2011; and New Orleans, LA, resident Cristian Miguel Soler. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Sixth Anniversary of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

March 22, 2016

Just 6 years ago, the reality in our country was that millions of Americans were locked out of our health care system because they couldn't afford insurance or because they had preexisting conditions. Women were charged more than men simply because they were women. People who needed coverage the most were too often denied it.

At the same time, rising health care costs posed a significant threat to our economy, eroding workers' paychecks, and adding to our deficits. And while costs were high, the quality of care often wasn't.

The good news is, we've taken significant strides to change that. Tomorrow marks 6 years since I signed the Affordable Care Act into law. Thanks to this law, 20 million more Americans now know the security of having health insurance, and our uninsured rate is below 10 percent for the first time on record. As many as 129 million people with preexisting conditions can no longer be denied coverage or charged more as a result. Those with private insurance got an upgrade as well: Now almost 140 million Americans are guaranteed free preventive care, like certain cancer screenings and vaccines, and improvements in the quality of care in hospitals have averted 87,000 deaths since 2010.

We're also making historic investments to make sure our health care system puts patients first. We're paying doctors for what works, improving the safety and effectiveness of health care that patients receive. We're helping doctors and hospitals coordinate with each other by unlocking health data. And we're giving patients more information and tools to stay healthy.

Critics said this law would destroy jobs and cripple the economy, but in fact, just the opposite has happened. Our businesses have added jobs every single month since I signed it into law. The unemployment rate has dropped from almost 10 percent to 4.9 percent. Thanks in part to this law, health care prices have risen at the lowest rate in 50 years. Medicare is continuing a period of slow spending growth, saving taxpayers more than $470 billion from 2009 to 2014 alone. And premiums for a family with job-based coverage are almost $2,600 lower than if trends from the decade before the law had continued.

We've made good progress in the last 6 years. But we still have more work to do. We'll keep working to get more Americans covered and help the millions of people who remain uninsured in States that rejected the Medicaid expansion option. We'll keep working to make insurance and prescription drugs more affordable. And we'll keep working to reduce costs and improve the quality of care throughout our health system.

But the facts are clear: America is on a stronger footing because of the Affordable Care Act. Six years later, this is no longer just about a law. It's not about politics. It's about the recent college graduate who can stay on his parent's health insurance until he's 26. It's about the working mom who has coverage because her State expanded Medicaid. It's about the entrepreneur who has the freedom to pursue her dream and start that new business. After nearly a century of effort, and

thanks to the thousands of people who fought so hard to pass and implement this law, we have at last succeeded in leaving our kids and grandkids a country where preexisting conditions exclusions are a thing of the past, affordable options are within our reach, and health care is no longer a privilege, but a right.

The President's News Conference With President Mauricio Macri of Argentina in Buenos Aires, Argentina
March 23, 2016

[*President Macri spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

President Macri. Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us today. And welcome, Mr. President—dear Mr. President. We are very happy to have you visiting with your whole family. And I would like to take a minute to share with you this grief all of us around the world have felt in the face of this new cruel and devastating attack. I would like to convey my solidarity to the families of the victims. And once again, it's a good opportunity to reflect with you on the fact that fanaticism brings intolerance, aggression, and violence, which leads to nowhere. So Argentina once again condemns this kind of terrorist attack, which we deeply regret.

But allow me to say once again that this visit, Mr. President, has a special meaning for us. We see it as a gesture of affection, friendship, at a time when Argentina is embarking on a—towards a new horizon and is in the process of changing. We feel that our countries share profound values in common: respect for human rights, for individual freedoms, for democracy, for justice, and for peace.

And I feel that with you I also share a view on the 21st century, which presents challenges and opportunities. This is a century of the society of knowledge, of the development of science and technology, of innovation, entrepreneurship. That is what will clearly allow us to get the best jobs for our people.

And at this point, I would like to stress, Mr. President, your own leadership, which has been very inspiring for most leaders. You emerged proposing major changes, and you showed they were possible; that by being bold and with conviction you could challenge the status quo. And you achieved just this in your country and around the world. And that was also a path of inspiration for what our dear country is now going through. So thank you very much for that source of inspiration.

I would like to briefly review some of the many things we have agreed on over the course of these weeks of work, which led up to this visit. The first one, consistent with the pillar of the commitments I have entered into with my teams, we want Argentina to have zero poverty. And we know that first pillars are education and work. So the first agreement we signed seeks to boost exchanges in scholarships and teacher training, deepening work and development in science and technology.

And as regards the creation of work, which is something we touched upon this morning too, let me stress the importance of increasing trade between our two countries. Argentina has a lot to offer, and right now it has a very low level of trade exchange with the United States. It is very important for us to work together to enhance investments by your companies in Argentina, and also encouraging the development of SMEs, which are the main generators of work. There, again, I would like to congratulate you, because for 72 consecutive months, I'm told, you have been creating work in your country. And I hope Argentina is embarking upon a similar cycle as part of which will permanently create work for our people to live better.

The other area we are engaged to working in together, which is also the second axis or pillar for our Government, is dealing with and defeating drug trafficking. I mentioned this

morning that, in the past decade, drug trafficking has advanced a lot in our country. So we are very happy to be able to start working together on that front to exchange information, technology, training, and to really fight a relentless battle against organized crime and money laundering.

Also, within this framework of dialogue, respect, and cooperation, which I would like to thank you for, is that only hours away from commemorating the anniversary of the military coup that led to the consolidation of the darkest chapter in our history. At our request, which was to have the files related to that violent decade in Argentina declassified, you agreed to this. And we are very thankful for that gesture. We all need, and we are actually entitled to know what the truth is. And for the Argentine people, that has been a very clear indication that if we engage in dialogue with other countries, and do so seriously and respectfully, other countries will quickly respond and cooperate with our requests.

And finally, I would like to stress another core area of our discussions, as part of which you've also shown great leadership, very significant leadership, which has to do with the defense and protection of our environment: the fight against climate change.

The progress that has been seen in terms of disseminating renewable energies and boosting them, this is something Argentina is also joining. And I deeply believe in this; I told you that. As mayor of the city, I learned about the importance of the green agenda, and now I'm committed to make sure that our country also leads in the fight against climate change in the 21st century.

I would like to end where I started, by thanking you, Mr. President, for your visit, say that I believe this is the beginning of a new phase of mature, intelligent, constructive relations in which the only concern for us both is to improve the quality of life of our people. And I'm sure that by working together we'll achieve this.

Thank you very much. And please feel at home.

President Obama. Buenas tardes—good afternoon. It is wonderful to be in Argentina for the first time. And I want to thank the people of Argentina and President Macri and his team for hosting not only myself, but also my family to this beautiful city.

As the President indicated, we just had an excellent conversation. And I can tell you that President Macri is a man in a hurry. [*Laughter*] I'm impressed because he has moved rapidly on so many of the reforms that he promised: to create more sustainable and inclusive economic growth and to reconnect Argentina with the global economy and the world community. And today, in a show of confidence in Argentina's new direction, many U.S businesses are announcing tens of millions of dollars in new investment here in Argentina, which can be part of the broader package of investment that can lead to new jobs and economic growth here in this country.

And what President Macri and his team have achieved in such a short time is a testimony not only to his remarkable energy, but also the willingness of people from different parties to work together. And that is impressive given the history of political polarization inside of Argentina. And that's something I know something about, political polarization. [*Laughter*] But I've told him and his team that the United States stands ready to work with Argentina through this historic transition in any way that we can, in any way that we believe—and you believe—will be helpful.

And it's not just businesses that are taking note of the changes underway here in Buenos Aires. The world has noticed as well. Under President Macri, Argentina is reassuming its traditional leadership role in the region and around the world. And on a range of areas, we discussed the ways in which the United States and Argentina can be strong global partners to promote the universal values and interests that we share.

Terrorist Attacks in Brussels, Belgium

We share a commitment to freedom and security at home and around the world. And today the people of the United States and

Argentina stand with the Belgian people and express our extraordinary sorrow for the losses that they've experienced. We understand the pain they feel viscerally because our countries, as well, have known the scourge of terrorism, and we've seen our own citizens impacted by this kinds of senseless, vicious violence.

As I told Belgium's Prime Minister yesterday, the United States will continue to offer any assistance that we can to help investigate these attacks and bring attackers to justice. We will also continue to go after ISIL aggressively until it is removed from Syria and removed from Iraq and is finally destroyed. The world has to be united against terrorism. And we can—and we will—defeat those who threaten the safety and security not only of our own people, but of people all around the world. So that's a top priority of ours, and I know that President Macri shares those beliefs.

Argentina-U.S. Relations

That's one of the reasons why President Macri and I agreed to work together to disrupt terrorism, to do more to choke off the terrorist financing mechanisms that are in place, and to keep our people safe when they travel. U.S. Federal agencies will lend their support to Argentina's counterterrorism efforts. And we're also supportive of President Macri's intention to return to Argentina's traditional role as a significant contributor to peacekeeping missions, including by supporting U.N. efforts to protect vulnerable populations. And the United States is very proud to support this effort through training and equipment.

President Macri has also committed Argentina to help address the Syrian refugee crisis. And I hope that inspires other nations to do the same. And I'm very encouraged by his efforts to combat drug trafficking, reduce organized crime, and to make Argentina's streets safer. These are all areas where I think we can be very effective partners.

The United States and Argentina also share a commitment to protecting this planet for our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren. President Macri showed me pictures of his wonderful children, including the little one—[*laughter*]—who I understand was a Facebook sensation—[*laughter*]—and I can see why. So we want to make sure that she, just like my daughters and future grandchildren, that they've got the beauty of an Argentina or United States that has not been irreversibly impacted by climate change.

President Macri's support for the Paris Agreement was critical to its success. His commitment to sign the agreement and pursue its ratification this year will be critical to bringing it into force. Argentina has set impressive targets for producing clean energy, and they plan ambitious targets for reducing carbon emissions. And because we have experience—since I came into office, tripling the amount of energy we get from wind and increasing the amount of energy that we get from solar power 20 times, and the work that we've done on shale oil and gas—we are confident that we can be effective partners.

And I pledged to President Macri that we would provide any technical assistance that he thought would be useful in developing the incredible resources and clean energy strategies that he's interested in pursuing here in Argentina.

We also share a commitment to global health security. We've agreed to work together on our response to the Zika virus, which is obviously affecting so many in this hemisphere. We agreed to support the broader Global Health Security Agenda, including working together to improve capacity for vulnerable nations, because in a world that's interconnected, if there are diseases that are developing even in remote villages in Africa or Asia, because of global travel, ultimately, they could be a significant threat to our populations. We can't pretend that somehow it's just their problem; it is our problem as well. And we're going to work together to improve our capacity to detect and respond to and ultimately prevent the threat of new diseases.

It's also gratifying to see Argentina champion our shared commitment to human rights. I hope we'll work together to strengthen the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Human Rights System, to promote

civil liberties, independent judiciaries, government transparency and accountability throughout the hemisphere. I know this has been an area of great emphasis for President Macri.

And finally, after I leave Casa Rosada today, I'll visit the Metropolitan Cathedral to lay a wreath at the tomb of José de San Martin and to visit the moving memorial to the horrific bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center almost 22 years ago. I told President Macri that the United States offers whatever help we can to finally hold these attackers accountable. And we will, just to reiterate, do the exact same thing in going after those who carried out those terrible attacks in Belgium.

I do recognize that this week marks the 40th anniversary of the military coup. And tomorrow, to underscore our shared commitment to human rights, I'll visit a memorial to the victims of the Argentinian military dictatorship and recognize Argentina's historic and continuing efforts to make things right, to make sure that we acknowledge the incredible heroism and courage of those who stood up against these human rights violations.

And to prove that this is more than just a symbolic gesture on my part, as President Macri indicated, I'm launching a new effort to open up additional documents from that dark period. We previously declassified thousands of records from that era, but for the first time, now we'll declassify military and intelligence records as well. On this anniversary and beyond, we are absolutely determined to do our part as Argentina continues to heal and move forward as one nation. And I hope this gesture also helps to rebuild trust that may have been lost between our two countries.

And that's a principal message that I have not only for Argentina, but for the entire hemisphere. I obviously came here from Cuba. We have put a great emphasis on making sure that some of the ideologies, the disputes of the past, that they are frankly acknowledged, but that we also are able to look to the future and not just behind us. And that's why this visit for me is so personally important. It's also important because I've been a big fan of Argentinian culture. When I was in college, I read a lot of Argentinian literature. And I am proud to announce that I just tried *mate* for the first time. [*Laughter*] Because when I was in college, I would read Borges or Cortázar, these people, and they were drinking *mate.* And I didn't know what this was. [*Laughter*]

So I knew that when I finally arrived in Buenos Aires, I would try some. And I just had some, and it was quite good. [*Laughter*] So I may take some home with me when I go back to the United States. I don't know what kind of import and export controls I may be violating, but on Air Force One, I can usually do what I want.

So thank you very much, Mr. President. Thank you.

[*At this point, President Macri spoke in English as follows.*]

President Macri. Are we ready for the questions?

President Obama. Yes.

Ivan Pavlovsky, Press Secretary to President Macri. So next, we'll begin the planned press conference.

First, for Argentina, Liliana Franco, from Ambito Financiero newspaper, will ask a question.

Argentina-U.S. Relations/Argentina-U.S. Trade/Argentina's Foreign Debt

[*The reporter spoke briefly in English as follows.*]

Q. Welcome to Argentina. I will make my questions in Spanish because I am in Argentina, sorry.

[*The reporter spoke in Spanish, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. The first question I'd like to ask of both Presidents: Did you talk about a free trade agreement between the United States and MERCOSUR? And for President Obama, in particular, what is the role you assign to President Macri, especially considering the serious situation Brazil is currently going through?

And how do you view the current negotiation between Argentina and the holdouts, or the way we call them here, the "vulture funds"? Thank you very much.

[*President Macri spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

President Macri. So we have begun to look at ways to open up both agendas. This is a road that is now starting. And I told President Obama that we are exporting less than 1 percent of our agri-industrial exports, which means that there is a lot of room for growth as part of a path on which we must first consolidate MERCOSUR and then think about a broader free trade agreement.

But clearly, what we both feel is that we have enormous room for joint work after many years of almost nonexistent relations. A lot of opportunities are opening up, always with the same goal in mind, which is to create work for the Argentines and the Americans.

President Obama. As I said in my initial statement, we have been enormously impressed by the work that President Macri has already done in his first hundred days. And we seek good relations with all the countries in the hemisphere. But obviously, Argentina, historically as one of the most powerful, largest countries in the hemisphere, needs to be a critical partner with us in order for us to not only help our own people, but also to help promote prosperity and peace and opportunity in the region as a whole.

And I am absolutely confident that given President Macri's interest in transparency, accountability, economic reform here in Argentina, that he's setting an example for other countries in the hemisphere. And his engagement and willingness to have frank and constructive relations and conversations with the world community on critical multilateral issues like climate change, I think, promises to heighten Argentina's influence on the world stage in settings like the G–20.

So I am saddened that I'm only going to have 9 months of overlap with him. He's at the beginning of his administration. I'm coming to the end of mine. But what we can do is to start on an effective path that I think will sustain itself into the future.

Trade is an example of an area where we've already organized a working group between our delegations. They're going to identify all the areas where currently there are barriers that have impeded progress in our trading relationship. And we will systematically work through those. Organizing an entire free trade agreement may be at the end of the process. I think at the beginning, right now, there's a lot of underbrush, a lot of unnecessary trade irritants and commercial irritants that can be cleared away administratively. And that's some of the work that we intend to do right away.

You had a—was there a second part of the question?

[*The reporter spoke in English as follows.*]

Q. [*Inaudible*]—holdouts, how you see them?

President Obama. So with respect to the holdouts and the bondholders, this is working its way through the court system. And I know that President Macri has also initiated a proposal that's being considered by your Parliament. I have to be careful not to comment on the issue because of the nature of our legal system. These are judges typically that I appoint, and so in order for them to remain impartial, if there's a pending case, I do not talk about it publicly.

What I can say is that the constructive approach that President Macri has taken, I think, has opened up the possibility of a resolution. And a resolution on this issue will stabilize Argentina's financial relationship internationally in a way that can accelerate many of the other issues that are of great concern.

To some degree, this is viewed as high finance, and so ordinary people say, why does this matter? But if you're talking about foreign investment, if you're talking about trade, if you're talking about all the things that ultimately matter to ordinary people because they produce jobs and they produce economic development and provide more revenue in order to reinvest in education or science and technol-

ogy, that requires the kind of financial stability that is so important.

And look, I've been through this. When I came into office in 2008, the world financial system was going down the toilet, as we say. [*Laughter*] And we had to take a lot of efforts and make difficult choices. And they weren't always popular at the time.

But because of the steps that we took, our banks recovered faster than European banks, for example. Our economy began to recover faster. We started producing more jobs. So sometimes, short-term pain and taking decisive action early is the right thing to do, rather than putting it off to *mañana* and then you end up having a perpetual set of problems and you never restore the kind of stability and trust that's necessary.

White House Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest. The first question from the U.S. delegation will come from Josh Lederman with the Associated Press.

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization/U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy/Republican Presidential Candidate Sen. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You've resisted calls to alter your strategy for fighting the Islamic State, and you've said that your critics aren't offering any better ideas. But the attacks keep happening. Did Brussels change anything for you? And if not, would you like to—do you think that Americans should see more attacks as being inevitable? And what would you say that it says about the state of our debate on this when you have a major Presidential candidate calling for surveillance of Muslim American communities?

And, President Macri, if I may, you both noted that the U.S. has agreed to release more documents about the "dirty war." What do you expect that those documents will reveal about America's role in this painful chapter in your country's history?

President Obama. Josh, I think it is important to recognize that this is my number-one priority. I've got a lot of things on my plate. But my top priority is to defeat ISIL and to eliminate the scourge of this barbaric terrorism that's been taking place around the world. And we see high-profile attacks in Europe, but they're also killing Muslims throughout the Middle East, people who are innocent, people who are guilty only of worshipping Islam in a different way than this organization. They are poisoning the minds of young people everywhere. Not just in Europe, but in the United States and undoubtedly in Argentina, people are looking on these websites.

So there's no more important item on my agenda than going after them and defeating them. The issue is, how do we do it in an intelligent way? And our approach has been continuously to adjust to see what works and what doesn't. What has been working is the airstrikes that we're taking on their leadership, on their infrastructure, on their financial systems. What has been working is special operators partnering with Iraqi security forces and going after leadership networks and couriers and disrupting the connection between their bases in Raqqa and their bases in Mosul.

We've recovered—taken away from ISIL about 40 percent of their territory. And ISIL's leadership has been hunkered down, and we are going to continue to press on them until we are—we have driven them out of their strongholds and until they're destroyed. While we are doing that, we're also extraordinarily vigilant about preventing attacks in our homeland and working with our allies to prevent attacks in places like Europe.

But as I've said before, this is difficult work. It's not because we don't have the best and the brightest working on it. It's not because we are not taking the threat seriously. It is because it's challenging to find, identify very small groups of people who are willing to die themselves and can walk into a crowd and detonate a bomb. And my charge to my team is to find every strategy possible to successfully reduce the risk of such terrorist attacks, even as we go after their beating heart in places like Iraq and Syria.

And as our strategy evolves and we see additional opportunities, we will go after it. But what we don't do, and what we should not do,

is take approaches that are going to be counterproductive. So when I hear somebody saying we should carpet bomb Iraq or Syria, not only is that inhumane, not only is that contrary to our values, but that would likely be an extraordinary mechanism for ISIL to recruit more people willing to die and explode bombs in an airport or in a metro station. That's not a smart strategy.

As far as what some candidates have said, I think I've been very clear on this. One of the great strengths of the United States, and part of the reason why we have not seen more attacks in the United States, is we have a extraordinarily successful, patriotic, integrated Muslim American community. They do not feel ghettoized; they do not feel isolated. Their children are our children's friends, going to the same schools. They are our colleagues in our workplaces. They are our men and women in uniform fighting for our freedom. And so any approach that would single them out or target them for discrimination is not only wrong and un-American, but it also would be counterproductive, because it would reduce the strength, the antibodies that we have to resist terrorism.

As far as the notion of having surveillance of neighborhoods where Muslims are present, I just left a country that engages in that kind of neighborhood surveillance, which, by the way, the father of Senator Cruz escaped for America, the land of the free. The notion that we would start down that slippery slope makes absolutely no sense. It's contrary to who we are. And it's not going to help us defeat ISIL.

Last point I'll make on this: I understand, when we see the sight of these kinds of attacks, our hearts bleed because we know that could be our children. That could be our family members or our friends or our coworkers who travel to a place like Brussels. And it scares the American people. And it horrifies me. I've got two young daughters who are growing up a little too fast, and I want them to have the freedom to move and to travel around the world without the possibility that they'd be killed.

So I understand why this is the top priority of the American people. And I want them to understand this is my top priority as well. It is the top priority of my national security team. It is the top priority of our military. It is the top priority of our intelligence officers. It is the top priority of our diplomats. But we are approaching this in a way that has a chance of working. And it will work. And we're not going to do things that are counterproductive simply because it's political season. We're going to be steady, we're going to be resolute, and ultimately, we're going to be successful.

[*President Macri spoke in English as follows.*]

President Macri. Excuse me, but I don't think that it will help in any sense that I advance any opinion about what we are going to find. Let's wait, study the documentation, and then we can do some comments on it. Thank you.

Mr. Pavlovsky. Next, a question from Martin Dinatale, La Nacion newspaper.

U.S. Foreign Policy/Brazil

[*The reporter spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. I would like to ask you what you think is, or was, the role of the United States during the dictatorships that the region experienced, and whether you think there should be some self-criticism on the part of the United States with regard to that role during the era of dictatorships.

And I would like to ask both Presidents whether you have discussed the Brazilian crisis during your meeting.

President Obama. I have spent a lot of time, both before I was President and since I've been President, studying the history of U.S. foreign policy. And like the history of any country's foreign policy, there are moments of great success and glory, and there are moments that were counterproductive or contrary to what I believe America should stand for.

And I don't want to go through the list of every activity of the United States in Latin America over the last hundred years. I suspect everybody here knows that history at least as well

as I do. What is true, though, is that in the seventies, the recognition that human rights, how we approached foreign policy, how we approached our diplomacy was as important as fighting communism or whatever our long-term objective was; that that became much more central to U.S. foreign policy in both Democratic and Republican administrations; that there was a growth and a maturation of how we approached our foreign policy relationships.

And so if you look at how administrations thought about other countries back in the thirties or the fifties or the sixties, and you compare it to how we would have a conversation in the Oval Office today and what we would think was appropriate and what we would think was not appropriate, that has changed over time. And I think it's changed in a positive way.

And I think one of the great things about America—and I said this in Cuba—is, we actually engage in a lot of self-criticism. There is no shortage of self-criticism in the United States. Certainly no shortage of criticism of its President—[*laughter*]—or its Government or its foreign policy. And there are issues that I work on where I'm sometimes criticized from the left and the right at the same time, although for different reasons.

The one thing that I will say is true, though, is that everything we do today is designed to take into account transparency, human rights, to speak out on behalf of those issues. Even where we don't feel that we can force changes on a government, we're still going to speak out about them. So I made a historic trip to Havana, and I said the people of Cuba have nothing to fear from me, but you should know what I really believe. I believe that democracy is better than a one-party or one-person dictatorship. I believe in freedom of speech and freedom of assembly and that people shouldn't be arbitrarily detained. And I'd say the same thing when I'm in China or in Russia or with some of our allies in ways that are uncomfortable.

And so I think that it has become a habit. And we have learned some of the lessons that we may not have fully learned at an earlier time. And I think our experiences with a country like Argentina helped us to develop that more mature and—ultimately, I think, more successful—approach to foreign policy.

President Macri. Brazil.

President Obama. In terms of Brazil, we didn't discuss it extensively, other than the fact that we hope Brazil resolves its current political crisis in an effective way. It is a big country. It is a friend to both of our countries. The good news—and President Macri, I think, pointed this out—their democracy is sufficiently mature, their systems of laws and structures, I think, are strong enough that this will get resolved in a way that allows Brazil ultimately to prosper and be the significant world leader that it is. We need a strong and effective Brazil for our own economies and for world peace.

[*President Macri spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

President Macri. That's the way it is. That is what we discussed. We clearly are following this closely based on the affection we feel for the Brazilian people, Brazil being our main strategic partner out into the world through MERCOSUR. But we're convinced that Brazil will come out of this process and crisis strengthened, and we hope this will be as soon as possible. Because, clearly, whatever happens in Brazil also has an impact on what happens in our own country.

Press Secretary Earnest. The second U.S. question will come from Margaret Talev of Bloomberg News.

U.S. Response to Terrorism/Syria

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. President Obama, in the wake of the Brussels attacks, you obviously thought a lot about whether to go ahead and attend that baseball game yesterday in Cuba and to continue on to Argentina and complete this trip. But you're catching some flak for it, from some political critics at home. And I'm wondering, would you walk us through why you decided that this was the correct course in terms of optics and message? What is that message?

And finally, on the trip, it seems to me that both in Cuba and in Argentina, you are seeking to roll back some of the maybe overreach or interventionism of the cold war era. Wondering, now that you're here, whether that's shaping your views on intervention in Syria or—and a plan B.

And, President Macri, President Obama believes that normalizing relations with Cuba will give the U.S. a lot more credibility and leverage around Latin America. I'm wondering if you also believe that's true. And will you both commit to attending the Olympics in Brazil, no matter what happens with instability? Thank you.

President Obama. Margaret, I addressed this issue a little bit at the baseball game when I was interviewed by ESPN, but let me reiterate it. Groups like ISIL can't destroy us; they can't defeat us. They don't produce anything. They're not an existential threat to us. They are vicious killers and murderers who have perverted one of the world's great religions. And their primary power, in addition to killing innocent lives, is to strike fear in our societies, to disrupt our societies, so that the effect cascades from an explosion or an attack by a semiautomatic rifle.

And even as we are systematic and ruthless and focused in going after them—disrupting their networks, getting their leaders, rolling up their operations—it is very important for us to not respond with fear. Now, as I said, that's hard to do because we see the impact in such an intimate way of the attacks that they make. But we defeat them in part by saying, you are not strong; you are weak. We send a message to those who might be inspired by them to say, you are not going to change our values of liberty and openness and the respect of all people.

And I mentioned at the baseball game yesterday, one of my proudest moments as President was watching Boston respond after the Boston Marathon attack, because they taught America a lesson. They grieved; I was there for the memorial. We apprehended those who had carried this out. But a few days later, folks were out shopping. A few days later, people were in that baseball stadium and singing the national anthem. And "Big Papi" was saying what he felt about Boston—Boston Strong—and how a terrorist attack was not going to change the basic spirit of that city. Well, at that moment, he spoke about what America is.

And that is how we are going to defeat these terrorist groups. In part, because we're going after them and taking strikes against them and arresting them and getting intelligence on them, and cooperating with other countries. But a lot of it is also going to be to say, you do not have power over us. We are strong. Our values are right. You offer nothing except death.

And so it's important for the U.S. President—and the U.S. Government—to be able to work with people who are building and who are creating things and creating jobs and trying to solve major problems like climate change and setting up educational exchanges for young people who are going to create the next new, great invention or scientific breakthrough that can cure diseases. We have to make sure that we lift up, and stay focused, as well, on the things that are most important to us. Because we're on the right side of history.

And with respect to how my reading of our history in Latin America impacts Syria, I think it's apples and oranges. What I have been clear about is, where—when it comes to defending the United States or its allies and our core interests, I will not hesitate to use military force where necessary. When it is—but how we do that is important. We don't just go ahead and blow something up just so that we can go back home and say we blew something up. That's not a foreign policy. That's not a military strategy.

And I do think it is important for the President of the United States and the administration to think through what they're doing so that they can achieve the objectives that are the priorities of the American people. And I can tell you that how I spend my time is thinking through—with our generals, with our military, with our best thinkers—how are we going to most effectively go after ISIL; how do we most effectively bring peace to Syria. We don't just throw some military action at it without having

thought it through and making sure that it's effective.

President Macri. Well, I will give you my opinion on President Obama's trip to Cuba. It will be the great progress in American terms because doors have opened and tools have been given to those who want to choose again. And he, as President of the United States there, went without relinquishing any of the values we embrace in the United States and Argentina: the flag of freedom, the cause of freedom. In other words, it's about every human being able to decide what they want to do in their own future.

I think this step that has been taken enables and speeds up the discussion. And that's what we need for the Cuban youth who want more freedom, to find more partners around the whole world. I see that very positively, and I think it will be highly positive for the next few years, this relationship between United States and Latin America as well.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

[*President Macri spoke in English as follows.*]

President Macri. No, I can't hear it.

Q. [*Inaudible*]—the Olympics regardless of the instability there?

[*President Macri continued in English as follows.*]

President Macri. That's out of the program. [*Laughter*] I'm going. I'm their neighbor. I won't be able to run—I'm not in shape—but I will, in any case, go to the Olympics.

Now, we are set?

President Obama. [*Inaudible*]—have a Facebook question?

President Macri. Facebook? Yes, Facebook. Sorry, sir. Yes.

President Obama's Goals and Accomplishments

Mr. Pavlovsky. So through the Casa Rosada Facebook page, we have invited people to suggest questions to ask both Presidents. And we chose this one from Maria Pia Montero, from San Nicolas, in the Province of Buenos Aires: "What was your dream when you got elected? And were you able to realize it?"

President Obama. Well, you know, I—I ran for office because I believe deeply in the American people and that our politics did not fully reflect all the values and the talents and the goodness of the American people. And I thought I might be able to align our Government with our ideals: to make sure every child has opportunity; to make sure that if people get sick, they can get health care; to make sure that we don't discriminate against people on the basis of race or gender or disability or sexual orientation; that we are good stewards for our planet; that we grow an economy so that everybody benefits, and not just a few at the top.

And I wrote down a list of things I wanted to do, and I keep it in my desk. And I won't say that I've gotten a hundred percent done, but we've gotten a lot done. It is indisputable that the economy is much stronger now than when I came into office. We've created over 14 million new jobs. We've cut our fiscal deficits by two-thirds. We have provided health insurance to 20 million people who didn't have it before. We have not only reduced the acceleration of our carbon footprint, but we helped lead the way to gain a global agreement on climate change.

On the international front, Cuba is just an—one example of the work we've done. The Iran nuclear deal that took away that threat from the world, but also gave Iran an opportunity now to rejoin the community of nations. The work that we've done in Afghanistan: ending a war, but now giving them the opportunity to secure their own future. Work in remote places like Burma, where what had been a 40-year military junta is now on the brink of a new era of democracy. So I think our values—the values that I felt were—best represented America—has also been reflected in our foreign policy.

Now, one of the things I learned after 7½ years in office is that—and I've used this metaphor before—President Macri talked about running—we're like a relay runner. We take the baton. And sometimes, when we take the baton, we're behind in the race. And we don't always choose the circumstances when we get

the baton. The question is, for our leg of the race, did we advance the causes we care about? Did our team gain ground against the challenges that we care about? And on that front, I believe we have achieved that.

But we still have a lot of work to do. There are a lot of people in America who are still looking for more opportunity. I certainly have not been successful in getting the two parties to work together more cooperatively. And the tone of our politics is not—doesn't reflect, I think, what's best in us. There are still major challenges. ISIL is still killing people. North Korea still has a nuclear weapons program. Middle East peace has not been achieved.

So if I were satisfied now, then I would be blind to the many challenges we face. I can say with confidence that the work we've done has made both America, and I think the world, stronger and better. And I feel pretty good about the fact that I can look back and say that I operated with honesty and integrity and don't feel as if I said things I didn't believe or acted in ways that would make me ashamed. And that, I think, counts for something as well.

I said this before: I would have started dyeing my hair sooner so people wouldn't realize how much I've aged during these 7½ years, but it's too late now. [*Laughter*] So I'll just have to go with it.

[*President Macri spoke in English as follows.*]

President Macri. I started like this right away, so—[*laughter*].

Mr. Pavlovsky. The same question for President Macri.

[*President Macri spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

President Macri. I'm only just starting, but I would like to say—also stressing the first few words of President Obama—I am also here because I deeply believe in my people. I know this country, and I know what it's capable of doing. So I think we are all committed to building opportunities for all of us to be able to develop and to learn from one another.

And also there's something you said: To heal the wounds of the past, we need to put our future, our children, our grandchildren as the priority and build solutions that clearly need to be connected to the world. Isolated from the rest of the world, there's no future for Argentina. This is why your visit is so important, just like the visits of other Presidents and Prime Ministers who visited recently.

And that is what we're betting on: growing in peace, leaving a mark of peace, honesty, and hard work, which is what we Argentines are capable of doing.

Mr. Pavlovsky. So this concludes the press conference. Thank you very much to both Presidents, Mr. Macri and Mr. Obama.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:56 p.m. in the Salon Blanca at the Casa Rosada. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Charles Michel of Belgium; Agustina, Jimena, Francisco, and Antonia Macri, children of President Macri; Rafael B. Cruz, father of Sen. Cruz; Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who was convicted for his role in the Boston Marathon bombing of April 15, 2013; and David A. "Big Papi" Ortiz, designated hitter, Major League Baseball's Boston Red Sox. President Macri referred to the Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR), the Common Market of the South. Mr. Pavlovsky spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative Town Hall Meeting in Buenos Aires
March 23, 2016

The President. Hola! Thank you so much. *Muchas gracias.* Please, thank you. Thank you so much. *Buenos dias,* Buenos Aires! Please have a seat. Well, thank you so much for the warm welcome that you've offered me and Michelle and Malia and Sasha and my mother-in-

law and—[*laughter*]—a very important person. [*Laughter*] And on behalf of the people of the United States, I want to thank you for your friendship and the strong bonds between our two people.

Celeste, thank you for the wonderful introduction. Please give Celeste a big round of applause. That's not easy to do. The work that she's doing to prepare more of our young people—and especially our young women—for the jobs of tomorrow is inspiring. I'm glad to hear that when Celeste visited the United States as part of the Young Leaders Initiative, she got to go to her first National Basketball Association game in Denver. I don't think Ginobili was playing—[*laughter*]—but I can confirm that he is not only a nice guy, but also one of the best players in the world and a proud Argentinian. So he is a great champion. My Chicago Bulls have been losing, and the Spurs have been winning, so I'm not that happy about that. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank everybody at the Usina del Arte for hosting us today. And I want you to know that the reason I came here is, in part, because I've wanted to come to Buenos Aires ever since I was a young person like you. I very much enjoyed Argentinian literature, authors like Borges and Cortázar. And so I would read them and became fascinated with Buenos Aires. I said at my press conference today, the only problem was, when I was reading, people were always drinking *mate,* and I didn't know what that was. [*Laughter*] So I just had my first *mate* today. [*Laughter*] It was good. [*Applause*] It was good. And my team, my staff thought I was very clear headed at the press conference, and they said it must be the *mate.* So I might—I'm going to try to take some back. [*Laughter*]

But I also wanted to bring my daughters here, so they could see the beauty and the vibrancy of this city. They've already met one famous Argentinean, His Holiness Pope Francis. Now they want to meet Messi, but I could not arrange that. [*Laughter*] They will not get a chance to experience the Palermo at night. [*Laughter*] That's—they will have to come back on their own to do that, not with their father. [*Laughter*] And we're looking forward to visiting Bariloche tomorrow.

But also, whenever I travel, I always want to spend time with young people. Your generation has grown up in times of breathtaking change. In your lives, you've seen massive global declines in poverty and disease—so there's a lot of good news out there—but you've seen incredible strides for women's rights and LGBT rights. You've mastered technology. The world is connected now in ways that we couldn't imagine even 10, 20 years ago. But you've also seen unthinkable violence from terrorists who try to tear us apart, whether it's at an airport in Brussels, as we just saw, or a Jewish center in Buenos Aires. And all of us, Americans and Argentinians alike, stand up against the scourge of terrorism, and we stand with the people of Belgium during this time of enormous sorrow.

And yet, even though you've come of an age and—where change is happening so rapidly, your generation I think believes deeply that you can change this world for the better. You're more interested in hard work—the hard work of waging peace than the easy impulse towards conflict. You're more interested in the hard work of building prosperity through entrepreneurship, instead of cronyism and corruption. You're more eager for the progress that comes not from holding down people who are not like you, but lifting everybody up so that everybody has an opportunity, regardless of what they look like or how they pray or who they love. And that makes me hopeful. I'm always inspired by young people. So I'm going to be speaking very briefly, because I want to mostly hear from you.

I am here because these past several years mark a new era of U.S. engagement in the region, in the Americas. We're not just nations, but we're also neighbors. Millions of people in the United States are bound to the Americas through ties of commerce and family. Thousands of Argentinians study in the United States every year. Hundreds of U.S. companies employ thousands of people here in Argentina. And we're committed to expanding those ties of leadership and scholarship and trade.

And I'm here in Argentina because I'm impressed with many of the reforms that have been initiated by President Macri in recent weeks, his effort to reconnect Argentina to the world community and to lay the groundwork for a more sustainable and inclusive economy. He inherited a tough economic situation, just as I did when I first came into office. He's working to make it better. And in fact, to show their confidence in this new direction, U.S. companies are announcing tens of millions of dollars in new investment in Argentina. And I'm launching a new dialogue to strengthen business ties between our countries.

So the United States welcomes Argentina's leadership role not just in the region, but in the world. Because to solve today's challenges, we have to be partners. *Somos un equipo.* I'm only—I've got to practice my Spanish. [*Laughter*]

But it's critical that we work together. And that's one of the reasons why the U.S. has started a new chapter with our relationship with Cuba. I was honored to be the first U.S. President to visit Cuba in almost 90 years. And we still have differences with the Cuban Government, but what I said to President Castro is we can't be imprisoned by the past. When something doesn't work for 50 years, we have to try something new. And I believe that engagement and dialogue is more powerful than isolation and that the changes that we're making can improve the lives of the Cuban people.

And all of the people of the Americas deserve the right to speak and gather freely and access the world's information and participate in forums like this. And so we hope that that will happen in Cuba. We hope that will happen everywhere in the world. But ultimately, it's going to be up to the Cuban people, just like it's up to sovereign peoples everywhere to be able to find their own voice and create democracy and freedom. We can be partners in that, and we can help.

And this new beginning is going to be good, I think, for the entire hemisphere. Part of my goal is to move past the old debates that have defined this region, move forward in a way that benefits your generation. And unlike any other time in history, the technology at your disposal means that you don't have to settle for the world as it is; you can create the world as you want it to be. You already have the freedom to build a world in powerful and disruptive ways.

That's why we're going to spend a lot of time in the coming months in building more vibrant connections between young people. Five years ago, I started an initiative called 100,000 Strong in the Americas. And by the end of this decade, we want 100,000 U.S. students studying in the Americas, and we want 100,000 students from the Americas studying in the United States. And today I'm proud to announce that that effort is growing here in Argentina. Partners like InET and CAF Development Bank in Latin America have committed to increase student exchanges between our technical colleges. And I want to thank President Macri for committing to a thousand new exchanges.

And finally, last year I launched what we call the Young Leaders of the America Initiative. And we're seeking out the most innovative young entrepreneurs and civil society leaders and giving them a chance to earn the training and the connections and the capital that you need to make a difference. So this year, I'll welcome the first full class of fellows to Washington. We're going to help them expand their commercial and social ventures by embedding them in U.S. businesses and incubators and nonprofits and universities. We're going to give U.S. participants the chance to continue their collaboration with you back in your home countries.

And that's how we want to empower all young people. That's how we want to empower young women like Celeste. It's how we create a future where climate researchers in the Amazon collaborate with scientists in Alaska, where an idea in Buenos Aires can develop with an incubator in Boston. That's how we can make sure that we create a future where any young person can choose a path that opens his or her opportunities beyond their neighborhood into the wider world.

It's where a young person can learn skills in the State of West Virginia in the United States and put them to work right here in Argentina.

So Gino Tubaro, who's here today—where's Gino? Somewhere. There you go. There we go. All right, Gino.

So Gino is a great example. He was tinkering with 3–D printing as a teenager when, through the U.S. Embassy, he participated in the National Youth Science Camp in West Virginia. Then he learned the latest 3–D printing technology. When he came home to Argentina, he cofounded a company that used these new skills. He received a request from a woman looking for a prosthetic hand for her young son Felipe. And typically, those hands can costs tens of thousands of American dollars. Gino "printed" a new hand for Felipe for far less. Just a few weeks later, for the first time, Felipe could ride a bike, go fishing, do many of the things that normal children do. And since then, more than a thousand Argentinians have signed up for Gino's help.

So that's what's possible when we work together. That's what—what's possible when we invest in young people like all of you. So I am very proud to be here. I'm excited for your questions. I'm excited for our conversation. As you heard, my Spanish is not as good as it should be. [*Laughter*] But we have a translator here so you can ask questions in English or in Spanish, and I will answer them as best I can. And we have about an hour. So, *preguntenme.* [*Laughter*] Let's go. All right?

Who wants to go first? This young man right here. Go ahead. Yes, you. Introduce yourself, please.

The President's View of Historical Progress

Q. President, my name is Federico—[*inaudible*]. I'm a professor at the Universidad Salvador. President, I wanted to ask you the following question. We live in a world where cultures often clash instead of coexisting peacefully, where some believe their very survival depends on the eradication of others, where intolerance and violence have become a common currency and people are forced to abandon everything and flee their homes, a drama which I believe will characterize much of this century's history.

My question is this: Do you think all of the different human cultures will eventually unify or converge on a unique and universal culture, something like—perhaps something akin to the United Federation of Planets from the TV series "Star Trek"? I do not seek a scientific answer, just the honest opinion of a man who, as President of one of the world's leading countries, has been given a privileged point of view on the matter.

Thank you.

The President. That's an interesting question. Thank you.

I believe that under the surface all people are the same. Now part of that is my own heritage and my own background. All right, my father was a Black man from Africa. My mother was a White woman in the United States, whose ancestors had come from England and Scotland. I—my mother remarried, and then we moved to Indonesia. So I have a half-sister who is Asian. I have nieces who are half-Chinese. And so in my own family, I've got the genetic strains of everybody. And it gives me confidence—confidence that's been reinforced as President—that people are all essentially the same. Similar hopes, similar dreams, similar strengths, similar weaknesses. But we're also all bound by history and culture and habits. And so conflicts arise, in part, because of some weaknesses in human nature. When we feel threatened, then we like to strike out against people who are not like us. When we—when change is happening too quickly, then we try to hang on to those things that we think can give us a solid foundation. And sometimes, the organizing principles are around issues like race or religion. It—when there are times of scarcity, then people can turn on each other.

And so I don't underestimate the very real challenges that we continue to face, and I don't think it is inevitable that the world comes together in a common culture and common understanding. But overall, I am hopeful. And the reason I'm hopeful is, if you look at the trajectory of history, humanity has slowly improved. Not in a straight line: Sometimes, you take two steps forward, and then you take one step back.

But if anybody here was asked the question, what moment in human history would you want to be born, and you didn't know ahead of time whether you were going to be born in the United States or in Namibia. You didn't know ahead of time whether you were going to be male or female, born into a wealthy family or a poor family, so all you knew was you—what moment in history would give you the best chance for the best life? You would choose today. Because the world is wealthier than it's ever been. It is better educated than it's ever been. It is more tolerant of differences than it's ever been. It's more connected than it's ever been. It's healthier than it's ever been. We live longer than we ever have. We have better dental care than we ever have.

It used to be if you had a bad tooth, that was bad. You had a problem. Now you go see the dentist most of the time, in many countries around the world. It's a small thing, but it's important. Penicillin. Books. Women are treated with more respect, on average, today, even though we have a long way to go. People with sexual differences are treated with more respect.

And even violence—because today, we see terrorism, and it's painful, and we're shocked and horrified by what happens—and yet, if you look even in the 20th century, much less if you go back to the days of the conquistadors or Genghis Khan or slavery—but even just in the 20th century, the world is far less violent today, on average, than it was 25, 50, 100 years ago.

So all of that makes me hopeful. But as I said, it's not inevitable. And I think one of the things that's important for bringing about further progress is that we listen to each other and we understand our differences. I don't think it's necessary for us to all speak one language or all have the same foods or all have the same customs. But I do believe that there are some universal principles that are important.

I believe that the most important principle is a very simple one that is at the heart of most of the world's great religions, which is treat somebody the same way you'd want to be treated. And if you start with that basic premise, then we will continue to make progress.

But I also think that in order for us to make progress, we have to have that fellow feeling, and we have to combine that with the use of our brains and reason and our intellect. And what's interesting now, everybody here has a phone, and everybody is looking all the time. And in some ways, that's actually isolating people sometimes more than it's bringing people together. And what I also notice is, because there's so much information coming in, that sometimes people just surf the surface of information as opposed to analysis and understanding and study.

In America, sometimes in our politics, you see sound bites—what we call sound bites. I don't know the translation. But it's just the Twitter line without trying to figure out, okay, is this true or not? What are the facts? And when it comes to an issue like climate change, we have to have a maturity to say, okay, here's what the science tells us—the planet is getting warmer—and even though it's not happening right now, and it's a beautiful day outside in Buenos Aires, we have to start working now so that 20, 30, 50, 100 years from now, we still have a beautiful planet to live on.

That requires not just a strong heart, but also using our heads. And if we do those two things, then I feel confident that we'll make progress. We'll still have problems, but that's what makes life interesting, is having a few problems. All right? Okay. Good.

I'm going to go—I'm going to alternate between men and women so that we make it fair. Huh?

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. [*Laughter*] If you're a woman. This young lady right there, since she's standing right in the front. Get a microphone.

Q. I'm going to have a heart attack, Mr. President.

The President. Oh, don't have a heart attack! That would be bad!

Q. Yes. My name is Natalia Quiroga; I am university professor. I teach American political communication. I have no answers, but I want a few words for my students. And I know—I'm going to—[*inaudible*]. You are my hero, yes.

The President. Well, thank you so much. I appreciate that. Thank you.

Here, the—since you didn't have a question, I'll call on that young lady in the front as well, just so that she—that way I get a question. But that was very nice. Thank you.

Global Collaboration in Science and Medicine

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, I'm—[*inaudible*]—and I'm a research scientist. I'm very proud to have you here in my country, really, and thankful too, because I was educated in your country during my postdoc in teaching engineering research. So my question is related with that, with science, principally, because I feel like always art and science was, like, the fields where the human being have not limits. And I was wondering, is really—if you are not fine, if you are not really just doing more than collaboration between our countries—and this is the most important thing in these areas—why not to do a stronger collaboration between your country and mine, like this idea between another's that perhaps other people have? But I was organizing with Professor David Kaplan in the United States, who was my mentor there, to have a representation here in Argentina from their laboratory of research. Right?

I know that there are a lot of programs of collaborations, like Georgetown's, to be done, like I did. But I feel like a stronger collaboration in these fields must to be another kind of things—not only to have knowledge, but to put in the really thing—like, for example, technologic transfer, right? I feel like science, basic science, it's very, very important. When I am in there, like a researcher, I feel like we can do more.

The President. Okay, good.

Q. So I want to know about that. Thank you.

The President. Good. The—well, President Macri and I spoke about this in our meeting. I think the possibilities of collaboration between Argentina and the United States in the scientific fields as well as the cultural fields, there's a huge opportunity there. We can do much more than we've done so far. And you're right that it's not enough just to have student exchanges. There's work that also has to be done together. And the more minds we have at work on it, the sooner we'll be able to solve problems.

I'll give you one specific example, and that is when it comes to diseases and medicine. Everybody here is familiar with the emerging problem of Zika throughout the Americas. It turns out, that Zika is not a complicated virus. And I am actually quite optimistic that we'll be able to find a diagnostic tool and a vaccine for Zika. But the reason in the past that it hasn't been developed was because it was predominantly in small, poorer countries in isolated areas. There wasn't a lot of money to be made selling drugs to solve this small problem. And so it didn't get any attention.

Except now, we live in this world where everybody travels, where everybody is mobile, and so there's no such thing as a disease that's just isolated in one place, because if we don't cure that disease, if we don't identify it early enough, it will sweep the world. And oftentimes, it will sweep very rapidly because there's no immunity and people aren't accustomed to it.

And that's true for—we saw what happened with Ebola. Now were seeing it with Zika. And obviously, the thing I'm most concerned about is, if we end up seeing a flu, an airborne disease, because we know that in the past, during the—in 1918, with the Spanish flu, millions of people around the world died—it can go very fast.

So this is an example where our goal is to work with the Brazilians, with the Cubans, with the Argentinians, with everyone so that we are pooling our resources, solving the problem quickly, getting clinical trials done quickly, finding ways that are culturally appropriate to make sure that people get the medicines they need quickly. And if we use the old model where each country is doing its own thing and working with its own companies and not worrying about what's happening elsewhere, we're not going to solve it.

So I think the opportunities for collaboration are there. They are strong. We're going to be developing over the next several months, I hope, a plan for the kind of collaboration that you described. Now, it won't all change overnight, but we do think that we can make

progress in this area. And this is the kind of thing that not only solves problems, but it also breeds understanding. It creates—it makes people simpatico, right?—in a way that reduces the possibilities of conflict over time.

So it's an excellent question. Thank you.

All right. It's a gentleman's turn. Let's see, this gentleman right here. Yes, in the sweater.

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act/U.S. Global Health Policy

Q. Hi, and welcome to Argentina, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

Q. My name is—[*inaudible*]—from Neoquén. I am a medical student from the National University of the Comahue. And first of all, I would just say thank you for having us here. It's a pleasure and an honor. And thank you, and thanks, Argentina—as a truly proud member of the gay community—for fighting for our rights as humans, as we all are.

So, my question is, given the fact that, right now in the world, most of the main causes of death, such as heart disease or chronic lower respiratory disease, diabetes, or even clandestine abortion in Argentina, can be prevented with a proper health education, climate change policies, and of course, medical research. So which ones do you think are, in these 7 years now as President of the United States, your greatest achievements in terms of those issues?

The President. Well, the—well, first of all, I had to start in the United States, because we were the only advanced nation on Earth that didn't have a universal health care program, and so we had millions of people who did not have health care. So I had, as some of you know, a very big fight to establish a system that's not ideal, because we had to modify it and adapt it to the existing system that we already had, but that has now provided 20 million people with health care that didn't have it before.

So part of the answer is to make sure that people have access to basic care, particularly preventive care. Because so many of the diseases that occur around the world, we can prevent fairly cheaply, and once people are sick, then it's very expensive. So, in Africa, if we can get mosquito nets—we know that a lot of disease and death is caused by mosquito-borne diseases. And we've pushed very hard, and we are now in a position where we could potentially, if not completely, eliminate, then shrink drastically the incidence of malaria around the world.

It's not that complicated. It's just a matter of organizing how we do it. And we know we've done it before because polio, for example, is an area where there's been enormous progress, and there are just a few pockets of polio left in the world. Smallpox, same thing. So we know how to do this. It's a matter of global organization. That's very important. So that's point number one.

Point number two. People's incomes have to be increased. Nothing kills you like poverty. And so you can't separate trying to make people healthier from giving them the ability to make enough money and have enough resources to support themselves and their families. So one of the things that we've done, in addition to the global health initiatives that we've worked on, is programs like Feed the Future. And what we do is not give food—although we obviously are the biggest contributor of food around the world—but what we do is, we take small farmers and we say, what is it that you need to increase yields?

And in some cases, it may be something as simple as new seeds. In some cases, it may be something as simple as a small mechanized system so that they can process the seeds on sites. And just that small amount of processing allows them to sell it on the market more expensive because they don't have to send it to a big granary, and that person takes a cut of their income. And by getting a little bit more money, now maybe they can buy a small tractor in a cooperative.

And what we've been able to do is to see small landholders increase their incomes by 5, 7, 10 times. And suddenly, they become not just farmers, but small-businesspeople, and they start hiring people. And it creates a new economy in those communities. And that's not just an economic program, it's also a health

program, because if they've got more money and now they've got a roof over their heads and they can afford a mosquito net and they're eating better so their body has greater immunity to diseases, there's enormous improvement generally.

Now, the good news—remember I said this is why I'm optimistic—if you look at the U.N. Millennium goals that were set 20 years ago, we did not achieve all the goals. But infant mortality has dropped dramatically during that period of time. The number of people who live in extreme poverty has dropped dramatically during this time. And so I was very glad that the U.N. came together this year around a new set of sustainable development goals. If we can do that, and we continue with the kinds of joint health care programs that I discussed, then I'm optimistic that we'll continue to see progress. Because most of the deaths that happen, they happen to infants with preventable diseases; they happen to mothers when they're giving birth; they occur because of diseases that could have been prevented with very little money and people having slightly higher incomes.

And so it's going to be up to young people like you, though, to continue to find new areas where we can make progress and make improvements. So good luck. Good.

All right. All right, young woman right there. Yes, right there.

Q. Good afternoon.

President Obama. Good afternoon.

Poverty/Economic Development

Q. First of all, I want to thank your country and your administration for investing in women like me and others from around the world that use sport as a way of developing other women through the Global Sport Mentoring Program.

The President. Excellent.

Q. And then you mentioned two things during your speech before. One was that this is the generation that needs to make a change in the world, and I honestly believe that. And then you also mentioned that we cannot expect to create those changes if we keep on doing the same things over and over for this amount of years. And in my opinion, when it comes to businesses, that's kind of the ways things are working right now. And when it comes to social entrepreneurs like myself or social businesses, there are very few countries that have a framework to empower people and social entrepreneurs to create those kind of businesses. So my question is, what would be your advice for social entrepreneurs to keep on doing this hard work? And what do you think is the responsibilities of governments to change those rules so that social businesses can be the new kind of businesses in this world?

The President. Well, the—before I answer your question, tell me a little bit—tell me about your business. The—what is it? Tell me about the programs that you're doing.

Q. Okay, so I run a nonprofit organization in Rosario, and we focus on creating social change by empowering youth living in poverty and by create—and by generating civic participation. By that, we also use innovative tools such as coding for kids, new type of businesses we develop—we help them achieve and develop life skills. That's what we are doing right now. Thank you.

The President. And how long has the program been going on?

Q. Almost 10 years now.

The President. Okay. Excellent. The—well, I started in the nonprofit sector in community work, and so it's something that I care deeply about. Each country is different. In the United States, most of—most social entrepreneurs are typically financed through the private sector. Essentially philanthropies, rich people, or businesses, they finance it. Other countries, it will come through the government and the taxes that people pay.

But what we've learned is that for many of the social problems that we face, it has to be a combination of the private sector and the nonprofit sector and government working together to really make a difference. And what do I mean by that? So I'm sure if you go into a poor neighborhood in Argentina, just like a poor neighborhood in the United States, there are a lot of different kinds of problems. You have, first of all, economic issues because these

communities don't have jobs, they've been—people, businesses have not invested in them; in some cases, maybe factories that used to be there moved away, and so the jobs that people used to have there no longer exist.

So part of the effort has to be how do we bring—private sector businesses attract investment into those communities to create jobs. That's point number one. But the businesses may not come unless the government has built the infrastructure: the roads or the Wi-Fi connections or what have you. So the government has to make an investment. And even if the businesses and the government are prepared to do what they need to do, the human capital—the people—they have to make sure that they're getting the education that they need, the training that they need.

In some cases, in the United States at least, if they're very poor communities, you have young people who have been in poor families for generations. So they may not even know what the inside of an office building looks like. They may never have experienced what it means to go to a job at a certain time and structure their day in an organized way. And that's where a nonprofit, a social entrepreneur, can come and say, we'll partner with young people and have a professional or an adult who is working with that person and showing them, this is what's possible for you. Opening their eyes to telling some young girl in a poor neighborhood, you can be a computer scientist, and why don't you come with me, and this is what computers are, they're not that complicated, this is what coding means, and if you can do math, then you can start coding. And suddenly, just by them seeing the possibilities, that inspires their effort.

The point is, is that each of those pieces are important. I don't know enough about how social entrepreneurs and community organizations and nonprofits are financed here in Argentina to give you a good opinion. I could give you an opinion—politicians always can give you opinions—but I can't give you a good opinion because I don't have enough information about what changes might be made to give an organization like yours more support.

But one of the things that's interesting that's happening in the United States is that you're starting to see organizations that are kind of a blend of for-profit and non-for-profit. So they might have a business component that, let's say, sells handcrafts and artwork that's made by a community for profit, but then the money goes into financing the social programs that help give people these opportunities. Right? And how they're treated in terms of taxes and the corporate organization—that's going to change by country. Each country is going to have a different model. But more and more, I believe that that's going to be the wave of the future if we want to make progress on these problems.

I guess to make a broader point, so often in the past there's been a sharp division between left and right, between capitalist and communist or socialist. And especially in the Americas, that's been a big debate, right? Oh, you know, you're a capitalist Yankee dog, and oh, you know, you're some crazy Communist that's going to take away everybody's property. And I mean, those are interesting intellectual arguments, but I think for your generation, you should be practical and just choose from what works. You don't have to worry about whether it neatly fits into socialist theory or capitalist theory, you should just decide what works.

And I said this to President Castro in Cuba. I said, look, you've made great progress in educating young people. Every child in Cuba gets a basic education. That's a huge improvement from where it was. Medical care: The life expectancy of Cubans is equivalent to the United States, despite it being a very poor country, because they have access to health care. That's a huge achievement. They should be congratulated. But you drive around Havana and you say, this economy is not working. It looks like it did in the 1950s. And so you have to be practical in asking yourself how can you achieve the goals of equality and inclusion, but also recognize that the market system produces a lot of wealth and goods and services and innovation. And it also gives individuals freedom because they have initiative.

And so you don't have to be rigid in saying it's either this or that, you can say—depending on the problem you're trying to solve, depending on the social issues that you're trying to address—what works? And I think that what you'll find is that the most successful societies, the most successful economies are ones that are rooted in a market-based system, but also recognize that a market does not work by itself. It has to have a social and moral and ethical and community basis, and there has to be inclusion. Otherwise, it's not stable.

And it's up to you, as you—and whether you're in business or in academia or in the nonprofit sector, whatever you're doing—to create new forms that are adapted to the new conditions that we live in today. All right?

Okay, let's see. It's a guy's turn, a gentleman's turn. Let's see. The—hold on a second. Okay, the—that guy right there, the—in the dark shirt. Yes, you. No, no, right there. Go ahead. Yes, go ahead. You. Yes, I can hear you. Go ahead. Speak right into the mike though. You don't have a microphone? Where is the microphone? Here, it's coming. But be careful. Don't fall over. It's a little tight over there. All right. Go ahead and give it to him, yes.

Q. Hello?

The President. Yes, I can hear you now.

Q. Hello, Mr. President. I am Alexander Rohana, and I am a senior in high school. This fall I will be—I will start studying international relations in American University at the School of International Service.

The President. Excellent. We look forward to seeing you.

Q. Thank you. My question——

The President. Make sure to bring a coat though. It's going to be cool during the winter.

Arab-Israeli Peace Process

Q. My question to you is regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. I am an Arab Israeli myself. And the reality is that with an increase of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank, this is leading to more and more—to having a binational state. Do you think that a binational state where there is an Israeli Prime Minister and a Palestinian President or a Palestinian Prime Minister and an Israeli President is a possibility?

The President. No, it's an interesting question. I was asked at the press conference to reflect on my—the 7½ years where I've been President, where I've been happy and feel that I've accomplished my goals, where I think I've been frustrated. And obviously, the situation with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been an area where, despite enormous efforts on my part, I have—and a lot of people's parts—we haven't made the kind of progress that I wanted to see.

I continue to believe that the only way to resolve this issue is to have a Israeli predominantly Jewish state that is secure and safe, side by side with a sovereign and contiguous Palestinian state.

And the reason I say that is because I think the aspirations of the Palestinian people for a state of their own and self-determination is too strong to be denied. And I also think that the Jewish people, given their history, have to feel that they have a state that they are secure with and that they can preserve from aggression.

And so there has been talk about a one-state solution or sort of a divided government. It's hard for me to envision that being stable. There's such deep distrust between the two peoples right now. And the neighborhood is in such a mess that I continue to believe that a two-state solution is the best way.

Now, over time that could evolve. But initially, at least, I think the Palestinians have to feel like they have something of their own that they can say, this is ours and it expresses our deepest aspirations. And I think that the Jewish people have to feel safe.

Now, the problem is, is that history casts a heavy cloud on this. Each side only remembers its grief and has a very difficult time seeing the other side, the situation. And both of them have legitimate fears. And I will also say, though, that in some ways, because Israeli society has been so successful economically, and it has, I think, from a position of strength, been less willing to make concessions. On the other hand, the Palestinians, because of weakness, have not had the political cohesion and

organization to enter in negotiations and feel like they can get what they need. And so both sides just go to separate corners. And we have worked and worked and worked.

And last year and the year before that, John Kerry, that poor man, he was flying back and forth, and taking messages back and forth, and I was making phone calls. But ultimately, we can't do it for them. And so the tragedy of the situation there is that until the populations of both peoples recognize the truth, which is they're going to be living together one way or another. And the question is: Are you going to be living together with checkpoints and people being stabbed and hatred, or are you going to be living together in a way that creates opportunity and hope for children? Until they make that decision and that then is reflected in the political leaders they elect and the politics that they promote, there's very little that we can do to force it to happen. That doesn't mean we don't keep trying and trying to persuade and provide incentives. But ultimately, this is going to be something that those peoples have to decide on.

And here's the last thing I will say, though, and I've said this to Prime Minister Netanyahu, and I've said this publicly. If you look at the demographics of the region and the West Bank and Gaza and the Arab Israeli population, it's growing much faster than the Jewish population. If you don't find a way to resolve the conflict, then over time, you're going to have to make a choice: Do we preserve this as a Jewish state, but it is now no longer a democracy? Because if it was, then the Jewish people would be a small minority. Or do you preserve its Jewish character, but now it is—or do you preserve the democracy, but now it's no longer a predominantly Jewish state, right? You're going to have to make a choice.

The only way to avoid that choice—if you want to preserve it as a predominantly Jewish state and a democracy—then you have to give the Palestinian people and Arab people who are living in that community their own state in order to have self-determination. And I hope that that happens.

And even once I'm no longer President, I will continue to try to promote that peaceful dialogue. But I will be the first one to confess this is not something I was able to get done. And I'm not that hopeful that it's going to happen in the next 9 months. It's been 60 years; it's not going to happen in the next 9 months.

All right, so I'm going to go back here in the shadows here. I didn't even see these folks back here. So yes, this gentleman in the T-shirt and the sunglasses, right here. Yes, hold on a second; wait for the mike. This side hasn't gotten attention? Okay, I'll give you—you'll be next. [*Laughter*]

U.S. Presidential Election/U.S. Political System

[*At this point, the participant spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. The question is, taking into account that Donald Trump is one of the candidates in the Republican Party, why do you think that the people is supporting the policies that he supports? And do you think that he will reach the Presidency?

The President. We'll get a translation. I sort of understood—[*laughter*]—but I want to make sure I completely understand. All right? I don't want to turn out answering the completely wrong question. [*Laughter*] Where's my translator? No, no, wait, wait, I'm going to get a translation of the question.

[*The President's interpreter, seated in the audience, responded as follows.*]

Interpreter. I'm here, I'm here.

The President. All right, go ahead.

[*The interpreter began translating the participant's question as follows.*]

Interpreter. Yes. I have a question, which is kind of a two-fold question——

The President. No, no this is—she's translating his question.

Interpreter. I'm translating his——

The President. This is my translator. Okay, go ahead.

Interpreter. I'm—okay. It's a two-fold question. We're a little concerned about what's going on with the Republicans, and we see some very strong support for the Republicans. I'd like to know what you think about that and what you think about the coming elections?

The President. Okay, the—so the question was about—in the elections in the——

Audience members. [*Inaudible*]

Interpreter. Trump—the Republicans, yes.

The President. ——in the United States. So look, the United States—politics in the United States is complicated, just like every other country. You know something about this here in Argentina. Politics is complicated. But that's part of the problem with it, and the benefit of a democracy, which is, it's loud and it's noisy and complicated.

What you're seeing right now is, in part, that the Republican Party has moved to the right very strongly during the course of my Presidency. Now, there are a lot of reasons for that. But that's just a fact. And I think that the Republican Party, because of their efforts to oppose me, found themselves taking positions that were further and further away from the mainstream. It was successful in some ways in getting congressional candidates elected, because during those elections, the turnout is typically very low, and so the most passionate people vote. And in this new media age where people are getting their information, as I said before, in sound bites, and where they don't necessarily get the same information, depending on whether they're on the left or on the right, they can decide, I'm only going to read the things I agree with already, as opposed to getting a broader opinion. What happened was, is that it reinforced a politics that was based on what they oppose as opposed to what they were for. And primarily, they opposed me. And so that's what's happening inside of the Republican Party.

Within the Democratic Party, which I think is not going through as big of a change, I do think that Mr. Sanders and Secretary Clinton are responding to a continued concern, which is the economy has recovered, it is much better than it was when I came into office, but the crisis that we went through in 2008, 2009 has left a lot of people feeling more insecure. And so even though their lives are better now, they're worried, how is it going to be in the future.

And they see some of the global trends that you probably see here in Argentina, which is globalization is disruptive, and the days are over where you get a job and you stay in it for 30 years or 40 years and then you retire and you have a pension and it's all simple. Now, you might have a job for 5 years, and then the company closes and you've got to retrain, and you've got to go to another job, and you're trying to figure out how to save to pay for your child's education, while this—you're also trying to save for retirement.

And so you're starting to see, I think, a more vocal discussion of changing some of the economic arrangements and institutional arrangements in the United States. And in that sense, it's—this is the same debate that's taking place everywhere in the advanced economies. Right? What you're seeing is, more and more growth is going to just a few, and the poor may have improved a little bit, but the middle class starts to feel more insecure. And that creates a willingness to question some of the existing institutional arrangements.

So both on the left and the right, there are some disruptions and people are asking more serious questions about the economy. It's just that in—it's a little more extreme in the Republican Party. But look, I am a Democratic President, so you should assume that I'm—my answer is a little biased. I will acknowledge that.

The good news is, though, that ultimately, I have great trust and great faith in the American people. I think, ultimately, they will make a good decision in terms of the next President and the next administration. I also think that one of the great advantages of the United States system, even though it's very frustrating sometimes for the President, is that power is distributed across a lot of different institutions. It's what we call separation of powers and decentralization. So it's not just that the President

and Congress are separate centers of power; it's also true that you have State governments that are powerful. The private sector is powerful. And this makes it hard sometimes for America to change as rapidly as we need to, to respond to changed circumstances or problems because it's like a—it's sort of like herding cats. You have to—you're constantly trying to get everybody to work together and move in the same direction at the same time. And that's difficult.

The advantage is that even if we end up with somebody who I might not consider a great President, there is a limit to some of the damage that they can do because—and I'm sure Republicans feel that about me. They're glad that there's distribution of power because they imagine that I would have turned the United States into Cuba, I suppose. [*Laughter*] They tend to exaggerate a little bit my—how I see the world.

But that's why I think that the United States has been stable as a democracy for a very long time. And that's why I think not only do I have confidence the American people will make a good choice, but we usually can recover from mistakes, and typically, we find leadership, and because it's a democracy, there are enough voices that lift up to correct those mistakes over time.

This is the last question? Okay. This young lady right here. No, right here. Yes. Right here. You can go ahead and give her the mike.

Q. Bien. Good afternoon.

The President. Good afternoon.

Globalization/Arab-Israeli Peace Process/Politics/Democracy/Citizenship

Q. My name is—[*inaudible*]—and I'm 16 years old. I was part of the Young Ambassadors Program 2015, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. Thanks to that program, I had a chance to see the world from a different point of view by living with a host community in Missouri.

The President. In Missouri?

Q. Yes, in Kansas City——

The President. What city—what town were you in?

Q. On April, in late summer.

The President. Okay, where were you in Missouri?

Q. Kansas City.

The President. Yes, in Kansas City. Right.

Q. Kansas City. So that made me realize how different, similar are the cultures between Argentina and America. But at the same time, this program was lead to us to make an impact in our community when we came back. And I was thinking, why sometimes it's so hard for nations to work together to invent a better world? Why sometimes it's hard for political leaders to get along if, after all, we are all humans, and we all have blood in our veins, and we all want the world to be a better place? But sometimes you see news, terrorific things, and you just think, why can't I be President to change that? So you are a President, and maybe you can answer me? [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, first of all, the—let me—[*applause*]. So I'm just curious. What was the thing that you thought was most different about the United States? What was the thing that surprised you or you said, well, this is—I did not expect this?

Q. I'm really sorry that question—the answer is not going to be a serious one, but toilets. [*Laughter*]

The President. Were they better or worse?

Q. They were better, but they were automatic, so it's, like, kind of scary to get into there. [*Laughter*]

The President. Oh, that's a good point. If you don't know what's happening——

Q. Exactly!

The President. ——you jump up. [*Laughter*]

Q. Exactly.

The President. Well, not everybody has automatic toilets, so this must have been a very nice——

Q. No, but I can be serious. I think it's the way, like, as students—I had opportunity to have some classes at the high school——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——it was a public high school. And how the students see the world from a different perspective. Some of us didn't know what Argentina was, where it was. They would ask if we had Coca-Cola, if we had iPhones, if we

had phones. And some others knew so much about Latin America. So it's like——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——the U.S. is a big diversity country, and it was so awesome.

The President. Interesting, yes.

Q. And it was different from us—here.

The President. That's interesting. Well, every country has strengths and weaknesses. I will say that's an area where the United States—I'd like us to do better is greater awareness of the world outside of the United States. And part of this is just history. America was so big and relatively protected from threats from other countries. And it was able to develop its own internal market, and so for a long time, in some ways, America didn't feel as if it needed to know what was really going on outside. It's part of the reason why we don't do as well on foreign languages compared to a lot of other countries with the kind of educational levels.

And this is something that I've said to the American people and through our Education Department: We have to change how we approach the world, because the world has shrunk. And if we want to train young Americans to be able to compete, they have to know where Argentina is. They have to know how to speak Spanish or Chinese—or Mandarin. Or understand the cultures and the customs of other peoples. Every young person does in order to live in this now global community.

A reason that Presidents can't just solve things right away is because every leader in every country is gathering and expressing a very particular set of interests and history and institutional arrangements. And those interests oftentimes constrain what a leader can do, even if he or she wants to do it.

So I was just mentioning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If a Palestinian leader like Abu Mazen, President Abbas, wants to make peace with the Israelis, he has to convince Palestinians that they should give up certain claims that they may have in a negotiation. But if he makes that commitment, then there may be a younger Palestinian politician who sees that as a weakness, and it will turn around and say, look, Abbas is selling us out, he's not looking out for the interests of the Palestinian people, he is being manipulated or taken by the Israelis.

And then if Netanyahu wants peace, he's got to make concessions to create a Palestinian state. But he has to get elected, and he's thinking to himself, if I make this concession, then somebody in my party, the Likud, may challenge me. And so what happens is, is that most politicians are constantly making decisions based on what they're hearing from their various constituencies. And their constituencies, they want what they want. They don't want to compromise sometimes. They don't want to understand the nuances of things.

And then it turns out that in politics, sometimes, making somebody afraid of somebody else or creating an enemy is more successful in stirring up passion than trying to say let's understand this other person or these other people. So there are leaders who I think do a better job of focusing on the common good, and there are other leaders who are very narrowly focused on just how do I stay in power. And ultimately, if you're lucky enough to live in a democracy, then part of making sure that your leaders can act well is the citizens, the constituency, have to also be well informed and be willing to give him or her the room to do things that may not be convenient for you right now, but may actually be the right thing to do.

And one thing that Argentina and America share is, we are democratic. And I always say to the people of the United States, the most important position in a democracy is not the office of the President. The most important office is the office of citizen, because if you have citizens who are informed and know about other countries, and recognize that if we provide foreign aid to some distant country in Africa, that ultimately may make us healthier. And if you have a citizenry that recognizes that even if I have to pay slightly more in taxes—which, nobody likes paying taxes—but if I do, maybe I can provide that young child who lives in a poorer neighborhood an opportunity for a better life. And then, because she has a job and a

better life, she can pay taxes, and then everybody has more, and the society is better off.

If we—if you don't have citizens like that, then you're going to get leaders who think very narrowly, and you'll be disappointed. So the job—one thing I always tell young people, don't just think that you elect somebody and then you expect them to solve all your problems and then you just sit back and complain when it doesn't happen. You have to work as a citizen also to provide the leaders the space and the direction to do the right thing. It's just as important for you to challenge ignorance or discrimination or people who are always thinking in terms of war. It's just as important for you to do that as the President. Because I don't care how good the person, the leader you elect is, if the people want something different, in a democracy, at least, that's what's going to happen.

Now, the good news is, I think all of you are up to the task, up to the job of being good citizens. And I look forward to the citizens of the United States and the citizens of Argentina continuing to create a better world together.

So thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:41 p.m. at the Usina del Arte. In his remarks, he referred to Buenos Aires resident Maria Celeste Medina; Emanuel D. Ginobili, guard, National Basketball Association's San Antonio Spurs and the Argentine national team; Lionel A. Messi, forward, Spain's FC Barcelona soccer team and the Argentine national team; Secretary of State John F. Kerry; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; and Sen. Bernard Sanders and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in their capacity as Democratic Presidential candidates. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson, sister Maya Soetoro-Ng, and nieces Suhaila and Savita Ng.

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Mauricio Macri of Argentina in Buenos Aires

March 23, 2016

[*President Macri spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

President Macri. Good evening, everyone. Thank you for being here on this very special day.

[*At this point, President Macri spoke in English as follows.*]

Welcome to Argentina. We thank you, your family, First Lady, your team for visiting us. And let me tell you that I want to insist that we appreciate the moment of this visit. We recognize this as a gesture of affection and friendship. And let me tell you, Michelle, that I named my wife the sorceress, but after watching you today, I think that we have the visit of another one in Argentina. [*Laughter*] Everybody has been fascinated by you.

And let me tell you that everybody is very excited and happy of receiving you in Bariloche. But there is a little problem that I am trying to fix because they are a little bit disappointed because you are not staying a few days more. But already, I have solved it, so I forgive you, because I have promised that next year, you are going to come with more time and stay several days in Bariloche.

Dear President, as you may know, the first republic that recognized the freedom of Argentina was your country.

[*President Macri spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

And our country grew with the same views and values as yours. And this room is called "the room of emblems," and each column has an emblem representing a Province, equivalent to each of your States. And your commitment is to have Argentina be—our commitment is to have Argentina be a federal country. We are accompanied by many governors today,

with the purpose of providing equal opportunities to all Argentinians, wherever they were born.

Your visit, Mr. President, comes at the perfect time. It's been perfect timing. It's a time when Argentinians have understood and decided that we want to build mature, sensible relationships with all countries, worldwide, based on three essential commitments: dialogue, mutual benefits, and shared responsibilities.

And when I talk about shared responsibilities, I'd like to mention your words at the Summit of the Americas in Panama, when you talked about the opportunities that our continent has ahead of it that forces us to lead aside all hatred and look into the future. Clearly, the American continent has nowadays—or is nowadays in a situation of privilege. It can be the continent providing the best opportunities to its peoples and allowing them to live in peace. But for that, we have to work together. When I talk about shared benefits, mutual benefits, I refer firstly to having the continent be a continent without poverty, and that requires better education and good-quality jobs.

Moreover, it calls for us to fight together against drug trafficking and terrorism, because that is what will make our people live at ease. And finally, we have to improve and allot the quality of our democracy, advocacy of human rights, and our quest for transparency.

Based on these three pillars, I think we have a lot to build. Pope Francis, our Pope that was before here in Buenos Aires, quoted Thomas Merton in Congress. He talked about dialogue and mutual understanding, and everything is in its place so that between sovereign peers, dialoguing with respect, we can build solutions for our people to live better day after day. And that doesn't mean automatic alignments or ungrounded confrontations; don't expect that from us. With us, you'll find dialogue, good faith, and the belief that all that we are going to build is based on trust. In that, we have to invest and be consistent, day after day.

Argentina, just like the U.S.A., dear President, is a country of dreamers and entrepreneurs that came this far and has a lot more to do. So we fully trust our strength, our creativity, our capacity, and we look into the future with great optimism.

So that's why I believe that your visit, this startup of clever and mature relationships, has a lot to give the Argentine and the U.S. peoples. So I wish to thank you once again for your visit, and I remind you that we expect you, your family, and all U.S. families to visit us and share with us. I invite you to toast for the welfare of our peoples and for our mutual peace. Thank you.

[*President Macri offered a toast.*]

President Obama. Muy buenas noches. Good evening, everybody. President Macri, Mrs. Macri, Michelle and I offer our deepest gratitude for your extraordinary and warm welcome, and we bring with us the warm greetings of the American people in return.

And let me say at the outset, I will not make a liar out of you, and we will make sure to come back—[*laughter*]—because this country is extraordinary and its people are wonderful.

In 1961, the year I was born, two of our predecessors, President John F. Kennedy and President Arturo Frondizi, sat down for a meeting in Florida. One of the agenda items was what to do about Cuba: what actions, if any, to take against their Government, or exclude them from our hemisphere.

I don't remember this meeting; I was only 4 months old. [*Laughter*] President Macri was just a toddler. But I mention this because almost 55 years and a lot of history later, we meet in Buenos Aires at a new and very different era in our hemisphere. I've just come from Cuba, where the United States growing engagement there is aimed at improving the lives of the Cuban people. And I'm here in Buenos Aires because, Mr. President, the world has noticed your eagerness to reengage Argentina with the global community and to reassert the global leadership that, historically, Argentina has played. And we welcome that very, very much. It's good not just for the region, but it's good for the world.

I enjoyed very much our work together today, and I was extremely moved by the visit to the Metropolitan Cathedral. I was inspired by

the young people who I interacted with, their talent and their optimism and their vision for the future. I understand the business forum our countries held together was fruitful; it will lead to what we both want so much for our people, which is more jobs and more opportunity. I know that our spectacular First Ladies outshone us, as they usually do, and highlighted the vital importance of opportunity and education and equality for our girls and our women.

This has all been a great reminder that the people of my country and the people of yours have so much in common. We share the same values of freedom and opportunity and a commitment to justice and human rights and rule of law. We try to live up to the example of a singular Argentinian, His Holiness Pope Francis, who I was honored to host last year at the White House, and we know that our work as nations must be about lifting up the most vulnerable and caring for the least of these and treating people as we would want ourselves to be treated. We even possess the same pioneering, frontier spirit. We have different names for it: We call it cowboys; you call it *gauchos*. And I've confessed that I have been intrigued to visit a country that maybe eats more red meat than the United States of America. [*Laughter*] That's hard to find. That's not an easy claim to take from cowboys. [*Laughter*]

But my hope is that, given the extraordinary history between our two countries, that this is a new beginning. I am coming to the end of my term as President of the United States. Michelle, by the way, is quite pleased about that. [*Laughter*] You are just getting started. But as we meet here today, what we recognize is that the opportunities and possibilities for our two countries are not bound by just two leaders. They're bound by our fellow citizens and the friendships and the bonds and the common interests that we share and that we can promote. And if we do, that will be good for the world because both of our countries have extraordinary strengths, and because we are democracies, both of our countries have the capacity to learn from some of the tragedies and pain of the past. And that makes us, I think, uniquely situated to help to promote those things that we care about so deeply.

So, in the spirit of renewed friendship and partnership and engagement, I'd like to close with the words of one of Argentina's great gifts to the world, Jorge Luis Borges, who once said, "And now, I think that in this country we have a certain right to hope."

I think we have a certain right to hope as a consequence of the extraordinary work we're doing today. So let me propose a toast. To Mauricio and Juliana, to the friendship between our peoples, to our inviolable right to hope*: ¡Al gran pueblo Argentino, salud!*

[*President Obama offered a toast.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8:12 p.m. in the Shields Hall at the Centro Cultural Kirchner. In his remarks, he referred to Juliana Awada, wife of President Macri. President Macri's remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks With President Mauricio Macri of Argentina at the Parque de la Memoria in Buenos Aires, Argentina
March 24, 2016

President Obama. Well, good morning. It's humbling to join President Macri at this poignant and beautiful memorial in honor of the victims of the Argentinian military dictatorship and the suffering their families have endured.

This park is a tribute to their memory. But it's also a tribute to the bravery and tenacity of the parents, the spouses, siblings, and the children who love and remember them and who refuse to give up until they get the truth and the justice they deserve.

To those families: Your relentlessness, your determination has made a difference. You've driven Argentina's remarkable efforts to hold

responsible those who perpetrated these crimes. You are the ones who will ensure that the past is remembered, and the promise of *"Nunca Más"* is finally fulfilled.

It takes courage for a society to address uncomfortable truths about the darker parts of its past. Confronting crimes committed by our own leaders, by our own people, that can be divisive and frustrating. But it's essential to moving forward, to building a peaceful and prosperous future and a country that respects the rights of all of its citizens.

Today we also commemorate those who fought side by side with Argentinians for human rights. The scientists who answered the call from the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo to help identify victims in Argentina and around the world. The journalists, like Bob Cox, who bravely reported on human rights abuses despite threats to them and their families.

The diplomats, like Tex Harris, who worked in the U.S. Embassy here to document human rights abuses and identify the disappeared; and like Patt Derian, the Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights for President Jimmy Carter, a President who understood that human rights is a fundamental element of foreign policy. That understanding is something that has influenced the way we strive to conduct ourselves in the world ever since.

There's been controversy about the policies of the United States early in those dark days, and the United States, when it reflects on what happened here, has to examine its own policies as well and its own past. Democracies have to have the courage to acknowledge when we don't live up to the ideals that we stand for, when we've been slow to speak out for human rights. And that was the case here.

But because of the principles of Americans who served our Government, our diplomats documented and described many instances of human rights violations. In 2002, as part of a 2-year effort, the U.S. declassified and released thousands of those records, many of which were used as evidence to hold the perpetrators accountable.

Today, in response to a request from President Macri, and to continue helping the families of the victims find some of the truth and justice they deserve, I can announce that the United States Government will declassify even more documents from that period, including, for the first time, military and intelligence records, because I believe we have a responsibility to confront the past with honesty and transparency.

A memorial like this speaks to the responsibilities that all of us have. We cannot forget the past. But when we find the courage to confront it, when we find the courage to change that past, that's when we build a better future. That's what the families of the victims have done. And the United States of America wants to continue to be a partner in your efforts. Because what happened here in Argentina is not unique to Argentina, and it's not confined to the past. And each of us have a responsibility each and every day to make sure that wherever we see injustice, wherever we see rule of law flouted, that we are honest witnesses, that we're speaking out, and that we're examining our own hearts and taking responsibility to make this a better place for our children and our grandchildren.

Thank you very much.

President Macri. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you very much, dear President, for joining us on such an important date for the Argentine people. This is the National Day for Memory and Justice and Truth. Justice and truth are two words that mean a lot and have a deep, profound meaning for the Argentine people.

Today marks the 40th anniversary of the military coup that consolidated the beginning of the darkest period in our history. And as I said during my Inaugural Address at the sessions in Congress at the beginning of the month of March, on March of 1st, this is a marvelous opportunity for all of the Argentine people, together, to say and claim "Never Again." Never again in Argentina to political violence. Never again to institutional violence.

Today we remember, with pain and grief, while thanking those who have joined us on

this visit, the victims who paid with their lives the intolerance and violence that were the hallmark of Argentina's past.

So, again, as you stated, Mr. President, today we need to reaffirm our commitment to democracy and human rights. Every day, somewhere in the world they are jeopardized.

So, again, I thank you for this visit to our country on this very special day for us. This gives us an opportunity again to work together, the way you have been doing it, for the defense of these causes around the world. This calls upon us not to be just passive onlookers of any violation, as has often been the case at other times in the history of mankind.

Thank you for this token of friendship and for this commitment to work together, also especially as regards this particularly painful time in the history of our country.

A good day to you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Robert Cox, former editor, Buenos Aires Herald; and former U.S. Foreign Service Officer F. Allen "Tex" Harris. President Macri spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the Observance of Easter
March 25, 2016

Michelle and I join our fellow Christians in observing Good Friday and celebrating Easter this weekend. This is a time to remember the sacrifices made for us and hold all who suffer close to our hearts. Yet it is also a time to rejoice, give thanks for the Resurrection, and unite with Christians around the world in proclaiming, "Christ has risen; He has risen indeed." We wish all who celebrate a blessed and joyful Easter.

The President's Weekly Address
March 26, 2016

This week, our hearts are with the people of Belgium, as terrorist attacks claimed the lives of more than thirty people. Yesterday we learned that at least two Americans were killed. We pray for their families and loved ones. At least 14 Americans were injured. And we pray for their full recovery, along with everyone else affected by these attacks.

Earlier this week, I called the Prime Minister of Belgium and offered him our full array of support in bringing to justice any terrorists involved in planning or aiding this unconscionable attack on innocent men, women, and children. Belgium is a close friend and ally of the United States. And when it comes to our friends, America has their back, especially as we fight the scourge of terrorism.

More broadly, we're going to continue to root out and defeat ISIL. We've been taking out ISIL leadership, and this week, we removed one of their top leaders from the battlefield permanently. A relentless air campaign—and support for forces in Iraq and Syria who are fighting ISIL on the ground—has allowed us to take approximately 40 percent of the populated territory that ISIL once held in Iraq. We're supporting Iraqi security forces who are beginning to put pressure on the ISIL stronghold of Mosul. And we will not stop until ISIL's safe havens are destroyed.

We're also working to disrupt plots against the United States and against our friends and allies. A team of FBI agents is on the ground in Belgium supporting the investigation. We've ramped up our intelligence cooperation so that we can root out ISIL's operations. And we constantly review our homeland security posture to remain vigilant against any efforts to target the United States.

ISIL poses a threat to the entire civilized world. That's why we've been leading a truly global coalition that will be vital to our success.

Secretary Kerry is leading an international effort to bring the Syrian war to an end, a critical piece of restoring stability to that war-torn part of the world. And next week, dozens of world leaders will come here to Washington for a summit focused on nuclear security. We'll use that opportunity to also review our joint efforts against ISIL and to make sure the world remains united in this effort to protect our people.

As we move forward in this fight, we have to wield another weapon alongside our airstrikes, our military, our counterterrorism work, and our diplomacy. And that's the power of our example: our openness to refugees fleeing ISIL's violence; our determination to win the battle against ISIL's hateful and violent propaganda, a distorted view of Islam that aims to radicalize young Muslims to their cause. In that effort, our most important partners are American Muslims. That's why we have to reject any attempt to stigmatize Muslim Americans and their enormous contributions to our country and our way of life. Such attempts are contrary to our character, to our values, and to our history as a nation built around the idea of religious freedom. It's also counterproductive. It plays right into the hands of terrorists who want to turn us against one another; who need a reason to recruit more people to their hateful cause.

I'm a father. And just like any other parent, the awful images from Brussels draw my thoughts to my own children's safety. That's also why you should be confident that defeating ISIL remains our top military, intelligence, and national security priority.

We will succeed. The terrorists will fail. They want us to abandon our values and our way of life. We will not. They want us to give in to their vision of the future. We will defeat them with ours. Because we know that the future belongs not to those who seek only to destroy, but to those who have the courage to build.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 1:45 p.m. on March 25 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on March 26. In the address, the President referred to Justin and Stephanie Shults, U.S. citizens who were killed in the terrorist bombing at the Brussels Airport in Brussels, Belgium, on March 22; Prime Minister Charles Yvon Michel of Belgium; and Abd al-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli, also known as Haji Imam, an Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization leader who was killed in a U.S. airstrike. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 25, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 26. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the White House Easter Egg Roll
March 28, 2016

The President. How's everybody doing today? Happy Easter!

Audience members. Happy Easter!

The President. You guys brought the sun out, so we appreciate that so much. This is always one of our favorite events of the year. It's so much fun. And I don't want to talk too long, but I do want to make sure that everybody thanks our outstanding Marine Band, who does such a great job. I want to thank all the volunteers who have helped to make this day possible. Give them a huge round of applause. And I want to thank the First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama!

The First Lady. Yay! Thank you, honey.

The President. Thank you.

The First Lady. Here, you take Sunny. Hi, everybody! Happy Easter Egg Roll day! Are you all having a good time?

Audience members. Yeah!

The First Lady. It is going to be perfect weather. The sun is coming out, which is always a great omen for the day. We're just thrilled to have you all here. Today is a little bit

bittersweet for us, because this is the Obama administration's last Easter Egg Roll.

Audience members. Aww.

The First Lady. Yes. And if we think about what we've accomplished over these past 7 years, it's pretty incredible. Because when Barack and I first got here, one of the goals that we had was to open up the White House to as many people from as many backgrounds as possible: to open it up to our kids, to our musicians, to explore our culture, to expose families to healthy living, and to just have a lot of fun.

The President. And our military families.

The First Lady. And also to our military families. I've got the peanut crew back here reminding me of stuff. But we can't forget all of our military families, who we love, honor, and respect for their service and sacrifice.

And since we started having Easter Egg Rolls, we've had more than 250,000 people come to this lawn every year. It's been amazing. Today we're going to have 35,000 people who will come in and out of the South Lawn over the course of the day. And we couldn't be more excited for this last Easter Egg Roll. We have danced. We have done yoga. We've got our SoulCyclers here. We've got some tremendous athletes and entertainers and artists who are going to read and play games with you all. We've got a little "whip" and a little "nae nae"—or however you do it. [*Laughter*] Something like that.

So we just want you to have fun. And the theme this year in our final year is pretty simple. It's "Let's celebrate." Let's celebrate all the good work that we've done, all the great messaging we've had, all the amazing change that we've seen in this country. And we want to celebrate our families. We want to celebrate our Nation, everything that makes us strong. It's our diversity, it's our values. That's what makes us strong.

And me and this President, we have been honored to be here as your President and First Lady, to be able to host you in our backyard every single year. So I hope you guys have a terrific time. We're going to be out there doing a little egg-rolling. We're going to have a fun-run today. I'm going to be running around the White House with a bunch of kids, so I hope—and any adults who feel like they can hang. [*Laughter*] You guys can run along with me. Don't feel shy.

So just have a good time. And just know that we love you. We love you all, and we're grateful for the love and support that you've shown us all these years. So thank you all.

The President. Happy Easter, everybody!

The First Lady. Happy Easter! Let's celebrate!

The President. Hey!

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:41 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks at the Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting Ceremony
March 28, 2016

Well, good evening, everybody. And thank you, Chancellor Syverud, for those wonderful remarks and reminding me of how badly my bracket is doing. [*Laughter*] Congratulations, Syracuse. You guys are doing great. I want to thank Robin's wonderful husband Peter and their incredible kids Jake and Nora for organizing this annual tribute to her memory. And I want to thank all of you for having me here this evening.

A Washington press dinner usually means ill-fitting tuxes, celebrity sightings, and bad jokes. So this is refreshing. And it is a great honor to be here to celebrate the 2015 Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting. Now, in this political season, it is worth reflecting on the kind of journalism Robin practiced and the kind of journalism this prize rewards.

A reporter's reporter, that was Robin. From her first job at the Charleston Daily Mail to her tenure as the New York Times national political correspondent—the first woman to hold that position—she always saw herself as being a servant for the American public. She had a

sense of mission and purpose in her work. For Robin, politics was not a horserace or a circus or a tally of who scored more political points than whom, but rather was fundamentally about issues and how they affected the lives of real people.

She treated the public with respect, didn't just skim the surface. Few reporters understood the intricacies of health care policy better. Few could cut to the heart of a tax reform plan more deeply and analyze how it would affect everybody, from a struggling worker to a hedge fund manager. Few could explain complicated, esoteric political issues in a way that Americans could digest and use to make informed choices at the ballot box.

Robin's work was meticulous. No detail was too small to confirm, and no task too minor to complete. And that, too, she saw as her responsibility, the responsibility of journalism. She famously developed her own fact-checking system, cleaning up every name and date and figure in her piece, something most reporters relied on others to do. And it's no wonder then that of her almost 2,000 articles, only 6 required published corrections. And knowing Robin, that was probably 6 too many for her tastes.

And this speaks to more than just her thoroughness or some obsessive compulsiveness when it came to typos. It was about Robin's commitment to seeking out and telling the truth. She would not stand for any stray mark that might mar an otherwise flawless piece, because she knew the public relied on her to give them the truth as best as she could find it.

Of course, these were qualities were harder to appreciate when her lens was focused on you. She held politicians' feet to the fire, including occasionally my own. And in her quiet, dogged way, she demanded that we be accountable to the public for the things that we said and for the promises that we made. We should be held accountable.

That's the kind of journalism that Robin practiced. That's the kind of journalism this prize honors. It's the kind of journalism that's never been more important. It's the kind of journalism that recognizes its fundamental role in promoting citizenship and hence undergirds our democracy.

As I've said in recent weeks, I know I'm not the only one who may be more than a little dismayed about what's happening on the campaign trail right now. The divisive and often vulgar rhetoric that's aimed at everybody, but often is focused on the vulnerable or women or minorities. The sometimes well-intentioned, but, I think, misguided attempts to shut down that speech. The violent reaction that we see, as well as the deafening silence from too many of our leaders in the coarsening of the debate. This sense that facts don't matter, that they're not relevant; that what matters is how much attention you can generate. A sense that this is a game, as opposed to the most precious gift our Founders gave us: this collective enterprise of self-government.

And so it's worth asking ourselves what each of us—as politicians or journalists, but most of all, as citizens—may have done to contribute to this atmosphere in our politics. I was going to call it "carnival atmosphere," but that implies fun. [*Laughter*] And I think it's the kind of question Robin would have asked all of us. As I said a few weeks ago, some may be more to blame than others for the current climate, but all of us are responsible for reversing it.

And I say this not because of some vague notion of political correctness, which seems to be increasingly an excuse to just say offensive things or lie out loud. I say this not out of nostalgia, because politics in America has always been tough. Anybody who doubts that should take a look at what Adams and Jefferson and some of our other Founders said about each other. I say this because what we're seeing right now does corrode our democracy and our society. And I'm not one who's faint of heart. I come from Chicago. [*Laughter*] Harold Washington once explained that "politics ain't beanbag." It's always been rough and tumble.

But when our elected officials and our political campaigns become entirely untethered to reason and facts and analysis, when it doesn't matter what's true and what's not, that makes it all but impossible for us to make good decisions on behalf of future generations. It

threatens the values of respect and tolerance that we teach our children and that are the source of America's strength. It frays the habits of the heart that underpin any civilized society, because how we operate is not just based on laws, it's based on habits and customs and restraint and respect. It creates this vacuum where baseless assertions go unchallenged and evidence is optional. And as we're seeing, it allows hostility in one corner of our politics to infect our broader society. And that, in turn, tarnishes the American brand.

The number-one question I am getting as I travel around the world or talk to world leaders right now is, what is happening in America? About our politics. And it's not because around the world people have not seen crazy politics; it is that they understand America is the place where you can't afford completely crazy politics. For some countries where this kind of rhetoric may not have the same ramifications, people expect, they understand, they care about America, the most powerful nation on Earth, functioning effectively and its Government being able to make sound decisions.

So we are all invested in making this system work. We are all responsible for its success. And it's not just for the United States that this matters. It matters for the planet.

Whether it was exposing the horrors of lynching, to busting the oil trusts, to uncovering Watergate, your work has always been essential to that endeavor, and that work has never been easy. And let's face it, in today's unprecedented change in your industry, the job has gotten tougher. Even as the appetite for information and data flowing through the Internet is voracious, we've seen newsrooms closed. The bottom line has shrunk. The news cycle has as well. And all too often, there is enormous pressure on journalists to fill the void and feed the beast with instant commentary and Twitter rumors and celebrity gossip and softer stories. And then, we fail to understand our world or understand one another as well as we should. That has consequences for our lives and for the life of our country.

Part of the independence of the Fourth Estate is that it is not government-controlled, and media companies thereby have an obligation to pursue profits on behalf of their shareholders, their owners, and also has an obligation to invest a good chunk of that profit back into news and back into public affairs and to maintain certain standards and to not dumb down the news and to have higher aspirations for what effective news can do. Because a well-informed electorate depends on you. And our democracy depends on a well-informed electorate.

So the choice between what cuts into your bottom lines and what harms us as a society is an important one. We have to choose which price is higher to pay, which cost is harder to bear. Good reporters like the ones in this room all too frequently find yourselves caught between competing forces. I'm aware of that. You believe in the importance of a well-informed electorate. You've staked your careers on it. And our democracy needs you more than ever. You're under significant financial pressures as well.

So I believe the electorate would be better served if your networks and your producers would give you the room, the capacity to follow your best instincts and dig deeper into the things that might not always be flashy, but need attention.

And Robin proves that just because something is substantive doesn't mean it's not interesting. I think the electorate would be better served if we spent less time focused on the he-said-she-said, back-and-forth of our politics. Because while fairness is the hallmark of good journalism, false equivalency all too often these days can be a fatal flaw. If I say that the world is round and someone else says it's flat, that's worth reporting, but you might also want to report on a bunch of scientific evidence that seems to support the notion that the world is round. [*Laughter*] And that shouldn't be buried in paragraph five or six of the article.

A job well done is about more than just handing someone a microphone. It is to probe and to question and to dig deeper and to demand more. The electorate would be better served if that happened. It would be better served if billions of dollars in free media came

with serious accountability, especially when politicians issue unworkable plans or make promises they can't keep. And there are reporters here who know they can't keep them. I know that's a shocking concept that politicians would do that. But without a press that asks tough questions, voters take them at their word. When people put their faith in someone who can't possibly deliver on his or her promises, that only breeds more cynicism.

It's interesting—this is a little going off script. But we still have our house in Chicago, and because Michelle and me and the kids had to leave so quickly, it's a little bit like a time capsule, especially my desk, which wasn't always very neat. So I've got old phone bills that I think I paid—[*laughter*]—but they're still sitting there. And for a long time, I had my old laptop with the AOL connection. [*Laughter*] But there's also these big stacks of newspapers from right before the election. And every time I go back, I have occasion to look back and read what I said at the time. And Lord knows, I have made mistakes in this job, and there are areas where I've fallen short, but something I'm really proud of is the fact that, if you go back and see what I said in 2007 and you see what I did, they match up.

Now, part of the reason they match up is because in 2008, during the campaign, people asked me really tough questions about whether they'd match up. And we had to spend a lot of time worrying about whether what I said I could deliver on and whether we believed it was true. And there was a price if you said one thing and then did something completely different. And the question is, in the current media environment, is that still true? Does that still hold? I think Robin understood this, because she asked those questions. She asked me some of those questions.

One of the reasons I ran for this office was to try and change the tone of our politics in Washington. And I remember back in early 2008, 8 years ago this month, Robin wrote a story wondering whether I could, whether it was even possible. At the time, I probably thought the piece was fairly cynical. And while I still believe Americans are hungry for a better politics, as I've said several times now, one of my great regrets is that the tone of our politics has gotten worse. And I won't take all the responsibility for it, but I'll take some. We all own some of it. I'll take my share. But Robin asked that question. She cast a critical eye from the very beginning. And that was useful. Still is.

As I believe that that for all the sideshows of the political season, Americans are still hungry for truth, it's just hard to find. It's hard to wade through. The curating function has diminished in this smartphone age. But people still want to know what's true.

Think about it. Hollywood released films about getting stuck on Mars and demolition derbies in a postapocalyptic wasteland, and you even had Leo DiCaprio battling a grizzly bear. [*Laughter*] And yet it was a movie about journalists spending months meticulously calling sources from landlines and poring over documents with highlighters and microfiche, chasing the truth even when it was hard, even when it was dangerous, and that was the movie that captured the Oscar for Best Picture. Now, I'm not suggesting all of you are going to win Oscars. [*Laughter*] But I am saying it's worth striving to win a Toner.

So look, I—ultimately, I recognize that the news industry is an industry, it's a business. There's no escaping the pressures of the industry and all its attendant constraints. But I also know that journalism at its best is indispensable, not in some abstract sense of nobility, but in the very concrete sense that real people depend on you to uncover the truth. Real people depend on getting information they can trust because they are giving over decisionmaking that has a profound effect on their lives to a bunch of people who are pretty remote, and very rarely will they ever have the chance to ask that person a direct question or be able to sort through the intricacies of the policies that will determine their wages or their ability to retire or their ability to send their kid to college or the possibility that their child will be sent to war.

These are folks who trust you when you tell them that there's a problem in their schools or that their water has been poisoned or that their

political candidates are promoting plans that don't add up. That's why the deep reporting, the informed questioning, the in-depth stories—the kind of journalism that we honor today—matters more than ever and, by the way, lasts longer than some slapdash tweet that slips off our screens in the blink of an eye, that may get more hits today, but won't stand up to the test of time. That's the only way that our democracy can work.

I mean, as I go into my last year, I spend a lot of time reflecting on how this system, how this crazy notion of self-government, works; how can we make it work. And this is as important to making it work as anything: people getting information that they can trust and that has substance and evidence and facts and truth behind it. In an era in which attention spans are short, it is going to be hard because you're going to have to figure out ways to make it more entertaining, and you're going to have to be more creative, not less. Because if you just do great reporting and nobody reads it, that doesn't do anybody any good, either.

But 10, 20, 50 years from now, no one seeking to understand our age is going to be searching the tweets that got the most retweets or the post that got the most likes. They'll look for the kind of reporting, the smartest investigative journalism that told our story and lifted up the contradictions in our societies and asked the hard questions and forced people to see the truth even when it was uncomfortable.

Many of you are already doing that, doing incredible work. And in some ways, the new technologies are helping you do that work. Journalists are using new data techniques to analyze economics and the environment and to analyze candidates' proposals. Anchors are asking candidates exactly how they're going to accomplish their promises, pressing them so they don't evade the question. Some reporters recently watched almost 5 hours of a certain candidate's remarks to count the number of times he said something that wasn't true. It turned out to be quite a large number. So talk about taking one for the team; that was a significant sacrifice they made.

This is journalism worth honoring and worth emulating. And to the young aspiring journalists that I had a chance to meet before I came on stage, those are the models you want to follow.

As all of you know, I just came back from Cuba, where I held a press conference with President Castro that was broadcast all over the country. So in a country without a free press, this was big news. And it was a remarkable thing that the Cuban people were able to watch two leaders—their own and the leader of a country that they'd grown up understanding as their archenemy—answer tough questions and be held accountable. And I don't know exactly what it will mean for Cuba's future. I think it made a big difference to the Cuban people. And I can't think of a better example of why a free press is so vital to freedom.

In any country, including our own, there will be an inherent tension between the President and the press. It's supposed to be that way. I may not always agree with everything you report or write. In fact, it's fair to say I do not. [*Laughter*] But if I did, that would be an indication that you weren't doing your job.

I'll tell you, this is—I probably maybe shouldn't do this, but what the heck, I'm in my last year. [*Laughter*] I had an in-depth conversation with President Putin a while back about Syria and Ukraine. And he had read an article on—in the Atlantic that Jeff Goldberg had done about my foreign policy doctrine. And he said, "Well, I disagree with some of the things that you said in there." And Jeff is a remarkable journalist who I admire greatly, and all the quotes that were directly attributed to me in there I completely agreed with. [*Laughter*] I said, well, but there—some of the things that were shaped may not fully reflect all the nuance of my thoughts on the particular topic that President Putin was mentioning. But I pointed out to him, of course, that unlike you, Vladimir, I don't get to edit the piece before it's published. [*Laughter*]

So you are supposed to push those in power for more evidence and more access. You're supposed to challenge our assumptions. Sometimes, I will find this frustrating. Sometimes, I

may not be able to share with you all of the context of decisions that I make. But I never doubt how much—how critical it is to our democracy for you to do that; how much I value great journalism. And you should not underestimate the number of times that I have read something that you did, and I have called somebody up and said, what's going on here? Because as Bob Gates told me when I first came in—I think it was my first or second week—I said, well, what advice do you have, Bob? You've been around seven Presidents. You've served in Washington, in the administration. He said, Mr. President, the only thing I can tell you for sure is that you've got about 2 million employees, and at any given moment in any given day, somebody, somewhere, is screwing up. [*Laughter*]

So you help me do my job better, and I'm grateful for that. Because the point of politics, as Robin understood it—certainly as I've tried to understand it throughout my tenure in this job—the point of politics is not simply the amassing of power. It's about what you do with that power that has been lent to you through a compact with a citizenry, who give you their proxy and say, "I'm counting on you to not just make my life better, but more importantly, to make my kids' lives better and my grandkids' lives better." Who will we help? How will we help them? What kind of country do we leave to the next generation?

And my hope is, is that you continue to ask us questions that keep us honest and elevate our democracy. I ask that you continue to understand your role as a partner in this process. I say this often when I speak to Democratic partisan crowds: I never said, "Yes, I can," I said, "Yes, we can." And that means all of us. If we can keep supporting the kind of work that Robin championed, if we cultivate the next generation of smart, tough, fairminded journalists, if we can all, every single one of us, carry on her legacy of public service and her faith in citizenry—because you have to have a certain faith to be a really good journalist; you have to believe that me getting it right matters, that it's not just sending something into the void, but that there's somebody on the other end who's receiving it and that matters—if you continue to believe that, if you have faith, I have no doubt that America's best days are ahead.

So thank you to Robin's family. Congratulations to this year's winner. And thank all of you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:49 p.m. in the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Kent Syverud, chancellor, Syracuse University, whose S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications awards the Toner Prize annually; Peter Gosselin, husband of the late New York Times national political correspondent Robin Toner, and their children Jacob and Nora Gosselin; actor Leonardo DiCaprio; Isaac Arnsdorf, Daniel Lippman, and Darren Samuelsohn, Politico reporters who fact-checked the public statements of Republican Presidential candidate Donald J. Trump; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; former Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates; and Alec MacGillis, reporter, ProPublica, recipient of the 2015 Toner Prize for his collection of stories, "The Breakdown."

Remarks During a Panel Discussion at the National Prescription Drug Abuse and Heroin Summit in Atlanta, Georgia
March 29, 2016

CNN Chief Medical Correspondent Sanjay Gupta. Mr. President, I'm going to start with you. Obviously, you have a lot going on, and this is a significant commitment. You flew down here. You're attending this conference. You're going to make comments here. Why this particular topic for you, sir?

The President. Because it's important, and it's costing lives, and it's devastating communities.

And I want to begin by thanking Congressman Rogers for helping to put this together and the leadership that he has shown. We very much appreciate him and his staff for making this happen. I want to thank UNITE and—the organization that has been carrying the laboring oar on this issue for many years now. We are very grateful to them. And I just want to thank our panelists, especially Crystal and Justin. Obviously, we greatly appreciate the work the doctor does, but part of what's so important is being able to tell in very personal terms what this means to families and to communities. And so I am looking forward to hearing from them.

This is something that has been a top priority of ours for quite some time. My job is to promote the safety, the health, the prosperity of the American people. And that encompasses a whole range of things. It means that we're tracking down ISIL leaders, and it means that we're responding to natural disasters, and it means that we're trying to promote a strong economy. And when you look at the staggering statistics in terms of lives lost, productivity impacted, costs to communities, but most importantly, cost to families from this epidemic of opioids abuse, it has to be something that is right up there at the top of our radar screen.

You mentioned the number 28,000. It's important to recognize that today we are seeing more people killed because of opioid overdose than traffic accidents. I mean, think about that. A lot of people tragically die of car accidents, and we spend a lot of time and a lot of resources to reduce those fatalities. And the good news is, is that we've actually been very successful. Traffic fatalities are much lower today than they were when I was a kid because we systematically looked at the data and we looked at the science, and we developed strategies and public education that allowed us to be safer drivers.

The problem is, here we've got the trajectory going in the opposite direction. So in 2014, which is the last year that we have accurate data for, you see an enormous ongoing spike in the number of people who are using opioids in ways that are unhealthy, and you're seeing a significant rise in the number of people who are being killed.

And I had a town hall in West Virginia where—I don't think the people involved would mind me saying this because they're very open with their stories—the child of the mayor of Charleston, the child of the minority leader in the House in West Virginia, a former State senator, all of them had been impacted by opioid abuse. And it gave you a sense that this is not something that's just restricted to a small set of communities. This is affecting everybody: young, old; men, women, children; rural, urban, suburban.

And the good news is that because it's having an impact on so many people, as Hal said, we're seeing a bipartisan interest in addressing this problem, not just taking a one-size-fits-all approach, not just thinking in terms of criminalization and incarceration—which, unfortunately, too often has been the response that we have to a disease of addiction—but rather, we've got an all-hands-on-deck-approach increasingly that says we've got to stop those who are trafficking and preying on people, but we also have to make sure that our medical community, that our scientific community, that individuals, all of us are working together in order to address this problem.

And I'm very optimistic that we can solve it. We're seeing action in Congress that has moved the ball forward. My administration, without congressional action, has taken a number of steps. And I know that you've heard from some of our administration here today about, for example, providing $100 million to community health centers so that people have more access to treatment. Concentrating on physician education in terms of how they prescribe painkillers to prevent abuse. Making sure that the treatment—medically—medication-assisted treatment programs are more widely available to more people. Making sure that the, not antidote, but at least means of preventing people, once they have overdosed, from actually dying is being carried by EMTs. So we're taking a number of steps. But frankly, we're still underresourced.

I think the public doesn't fully appreciate yet the scope of the problem. And my hope is, is that by being here today, hearing from people who have gone through heroic struggles with this issue, hearing from the medical community about what they're seeing, that we've got the opportunity to really make a dent on this. And I just want to thank all the people who are involved here today, because I know we've got people who are much more knowledgeable and are doing great work out in the field each and every day. My hope is, is that when I show up, usually, the cameras do too, and it helps to provide us a greater spotlight for how we can work together to solve this problem.

Dr. Gupta. Thank you very much. Mr. President, you had a chance to hear a little about Crystal Oertle's story backstage: again, 35 years old, mother of two.

First of all, are you comfortable talking about your story? Is this something you're comfortable with?

Shelby, OH, resident Crystal Oertle. Yes.

Dr. Gupta. You, my understanding is, around age 20, you started using Vicodin and—recreationally, once a week or so. Wonder if you could tell me what sort of happened at that stage in your life? How did things progress from there on?

Ms. Oertle. Well, I think my path into addiction, which eventually was heroin addiction, is pretty similar to a lot of people's stories. They start out with the Vicodin, low milligrams, not knowing how addictive it can be, using it recreationally until then they need it. That's what happened with me. It slowly happened from weekend to then needing it throughout the week, needing something to go to work. Eventually, I needed something stronger than the Vicodin. I was doing OxyContins, Dilaudid, things like that, until then it eventually led into me doing heroin.

Dr. Gupta. Can you talk about that? When you say it eventually led to heroin, what does that mean?

Ms. Oertle. Well, I was physically addicted. And the higher milligram things like Oxycontin and Dilaudid to me are pretty much like heroin. They're like synthetic heroin; they're almost as strong. So when it came to the point and I couldn't find those kinds of pills, I had to go to the street to prevent my withdrawal symptoms so that I could participate in my daily life: my children, taking—getting them to school, me going to work. So that's how I got into using the heroin after the pills.

Dr. Gupta. You—again, you have two children.

Ms. Oertle. Yes.

Dr. Gupta. And you were doing this in order to be able to function, it sounds like. So heroin, where were you using it?

Ms. Oertle. In my home. In the bathroom, while my kids were there, while they were at school. It was so much a part of my life. It was a part of my life. It's crazy to think about now the things that I did, but it was necessary, or I wouldn't have been able to function.

Dr. Gupta. Who do you call, if you will? I mean, what did you do when you started to get help? How did you—where did you even begin?

Ms. Oertle. Well, I tried a few times on my own. It didn't work. I personally couldn't get through the withdrawal symptoms. I couldn't tough it out. I know some people can. I couldn't do it. This last time has been the most successful recovery for me. I've been in recovery about a year. And I—[*applause*]. Thank you.

I'm on—it's called medicated-assisted treatment, and I take Suboxone, which is the Buprenorphine that the Surgeon General was talking about earlier. I'm in a program, it's called UMADAOP. It stands for Urban Minorities Alcohol and Abuse Outreach Program. [*Laughter*] I think that's what it stands for.

The President. You did pretty good. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Oertle. And that's where I go. And it's very intense. It's a lot of counseling, group counseling with other people that are in treatment, and then individual counseling, talking to a doctor. It's just really good. It's really worked for me this time.

Dr. Gupta. And again, I prefaced by saying, talk about what you're comfortable talking

about, but did you have interactions with law enforcement?

Ms. Oertle. Yes, yes, quite a few times.

Dr. Gupta. What happened?

Ms. Oertle. I've had to steal. So I've stolen from department stores and—to feed my habit. I've been involved in drug busts a couple times. So yes.

Dr. Gupta. When you talk about this medically assisted therapy, you're essentially using one type of medication—doesn't give you the same type of euphoria or high, but to help you wean off of the heroin in this case. Is that right?

Ms. Oertle. Yes, yes. And what I take actually blocks—I couldn't get high if I wanted to use heroin. It blocks the receptors in the brain so that you can't get high.

Dr. Gupta. And I'm going to come back to you in a few minutes again, but I wonder if you could just say—you've tried this a bunch of times, and now you've been a year again in recovery. Is there something that worked this time? And for people out there who say, "It just doesn't work for me, I've tried, it doesn't work," what worked this time for you?

Ms. Oertle. I think this time I wanted it more than anything, and taking that step forward, along with the support that I get from my family and UMADAOP advocating—I mean, this helps. Getting out there, telling my story, and helping other people helps me, and it makes me want to stay in recovery and keep doing what I'm doing.

Dr. Gupta. Great. Well, thank you very much.

Ms. Oertle. Thank you.

Dr. Gupta. Doctor Wen, you're sort of at the front line of this. You and I had dinner a few months ago, and I mean, some of the stories you shared were pretty remarkable. You're an ER doctor. How did you get into this? Why is this issue so important for you?

Baltimore City Health Commissioner Leana S. Wen. Actually, a very similar story to Crystal's. I saw a patient who I got to know over the course of her getting treated in the ER. And when you know someone very well as an ER doctor, you know there's something wrong. But this woman was in her late twenties. She was a competitive swimmer. She tore disks in her back and started out with prescription pain pills, but then got addicted to them and then switched to heroin. And this was a woman who was in a downward spiral. And she recognized it: She was losing her job; she was about to lose her kids; she was homeless.

And she came to us basically every week in the ER. And she knew that she needed help. I mean, this was someone who came to us every week saying, "I want help for my addiction." And it's one of the worst realizations as a doctor—it's one of the most humbling things and the worst feelings as a doctor—to know that you can't help them; that what this patient needed, what so many of our patients need is treatment: addiction treatment at the time that they're requesting it. But we couldn't get it.

I mean, we would never say that to someone who has a heart attack. We would never say, go home, and if you haven't died in 3 weeks, come back and get treated. [*Laughter*]

So that's what we faced. And I remember that I talked to her this one time about getting into treatment. She really wanted to do it. We set her up with an appointment, but it wasn't until 2 weeks later. And she went home that day and overdosed and came back to us in the ER. We tried to resuscitate her, but we couldn't save her.

And I think about her all the time because she had come to us so many times requesting treatment. And yet, clearly, there is a difference between how we treat her and how we treat everybody else because we need to recognize that addiction is a disease. If we treat addiction like a crime, then we're doing something that's not scientific, that's inhumane, and it's frankly ineffective.

Drug Interdiction Efforts/Drug Treatment and Prevention Efforts

Dr. Gupta. Mr. President, you've heard these sorts of stories before. When you hear it so—I mean, it's so lucid in terms of what the situation was like in the emergency room, the woman wanted help, what is your reaction when you hear this story?

The President. It's heartbreaking. And the fact is that for too long, we have viewed the problem of drug abuse generally in our society through the lens of the criminal justice system.

Now, we are putting enormous resources into drug interdiction. When it comes to heroin that is being shipped in from the south, we are working very aggressively with the Mexican Government to prevent an influx of more and more heroin. We are now seeing synthetic opioids that are oftentimes coming in from China through Mexico into the United States. We're having to move very aggressively there as well.

So the DEA—[*applause*]—our law enforcement officials—[*laughter*]—good job, DEA. [*Laughter*] Our—we're staying on cutting off the pathways for these drugs coming in. But what we have to recognize is, in this global economy of ours, that the most important thing we can do is to reduce demand for drugs. And the only way that we reduce demand is if we're providing treatment and thinking about this as a public health problem and not just a criminal problem. See, now, the—[*applause*].

Now, this is a shift that began very early on in my administration. And there's a reason why my drug czar is somebody who came not from the criminal justice side, but came really from the treatment side and himself has been in recovery for decades now. Because it's—this is something that I think we understood fairly early on.

Now, I'm going to be blunt—I hope people don't mind. I was saying in a speech yesterday, your last year in office, you just get a little loose. So—[*laughter*]. But I said this in West Virginia as well, and I think we have to be honest about this: Part of what has made it previously difficult to emphasize treatment over the criminal justice system has to do with the fact that the populations affected in the past were viewed as, or stereotypically identified, as poor, minority, and as a consequence, the thinking was, it is often a character flaw in those individuals who live in those communities, and it's not our problem that they're just being locked up.

And I think that one of the things that's changed in this opioid debate is a recognition that this reaches everybody. So there's a real opportunity, not to reduce our aggressiveness when it comes to the drug cartels who are trying to poison our families and our kids—we have to stay on them and be just as tough—but a recognition that, in the same way that we reduced tobacco consumption—and I say that as an ex-smoker—[*laughter*]—in the same way that, as I mentioned earlier, we have greatly reduced traffic fatalities because we applied a public health approach, so that my daughter's generation understands very clearly you don't drive when you're drunk, you put on your seatbelt, and we also then instituted requirements for things like seatbelts and airbags and reengineered roads, all designed to reduce fatalities—if we take the same approach here, it can make a difference.

So when I'm listening to Crystal and I'm thinking, what a powerful story, I want to make sure that for all the other Crystals out there who are ready to make a change that they're not waiting for 3 months or 6 months in order to be able to access treatment.

Because, Crystal, I think you'd agree that if all we were doing was dispensing the drug that is blocking your cravings for an opioid, but you weren't also in counseling and working with families, et cetera, it's shown that it doesn't work as well.

We've got to make sure that in every county across America, that's available. And the problem we have right now is that treatment is greatly underfunded. And it's particularly underfunded in a lot of rural areas. We—our Task Force, when we were looking at it, figured out that in about 85 percent of counties in America, there are just a handful or no mental health and drug treatment facilities that are easily accessible for the populations there. So if you get a situation in which somebody is in pain initially because of a disk problem, they may not have health insurance because maybe the Governor didn't expand Medicaid like they should have under the ACA—[*laughter*]—they go to a doctor one time when the pain gets too bad, the doctor is prescribing painkillers, they run out, and it turns out, it's cheaper to get heroin on the street than it is to try to figure

out how to refill that prescription, you've got a problem.

And that's why, for all the good work that Congress is doing, it's not enough just to provide the architecture and the structure for more treatment. There has to be actual funding for the treatment. And we have proposed in our budget an additional billion dollars for drug treatment programs in counties all across the country. And my hope is, is that all the advocates and folks and families who are here and those who are listening say to Congress, this is a priority. We've got to make sure that incredibly talented young people like Crystal are in a position where they can get the treatment when they need it.

Dr. Gupta. Okay. Justin, you're, again, 28 years old, and this for you started at a very young age. I mean, you're still young, but this started at a very young age. Can you share with us a little bit of—when was the first time you started taking some of these drugs?

Young People in Recovery President and Chief Executive Officer Justin L. Riley. So I really started experimenting with, kind of—the way that I frame it, as a kind of a hole in the soul. I never felt good enough or liked who I was or how I sounded or anything of that nature. And being, kind of, just in my own skin was something very, very uncomfortable for me. And that started around third, fourth grade, where I was consciously very disappointed with who I was.

And for those of you who have ever been a third-grader or know a third-grader, that's a sad statement: that the future of our country—at such a young age, it's so sad and hopeless.

Audience member. Religion.

Mr. Riley. But—thank you. But the other side of that, though, and where we really come into play—and I'll start to sound a little bit like a broken record—and if you don't mind, sir, I'll take a leaf out of your book of being blunt, but even more important than when that started, how that started, what that looked like—even though that that's important to understand—is that people can and do recover. And that there are millions and millions and millions of people that can and do recover.

I am very fortunate to be able to be up here and represent and to be an example. I am not special or unique. I have worked very hard, and I can appreciate that, and I would challenge others to also work hard. But those of us who are in recovery and know people that can and do recover, that's—and even to me—as important as this part of the conversation is—and we have to have this part—is what's even less talked about and even more underfunded is that people can and do recover, and they do that in a lot of different ways, and they're extraordinary.

Dr. Gupta. To the extent that you're comfortable, again, did you say third grade?

Mr. Riley. Yes.

Dr. Gupta. I mean, when you say third grade, I mean, were you starting to use these sorts of drugs? That's, what, 7, 8, 9 years old?

Mr. Riley. So I had—my mom's in close to the third row, so that's cool.

The President. Hey, Mom. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Riley. Hi, Mom. So I had a precarious allergy and still do. I was allergic to poultry. And so I learned at a young age, you take Benadryl, and Benadryl then makes you sleep. And then, if you also know you don't want to deal with life, just sleep through it. So for me—and they didn't fly me in because I'm the Benadryl guy, but that was part of my early journey. But that stopped satiating that hole in the soul, and I literally couldn't sleep through all of life, so eventually, that did manifest into other things, of course.

Dr. Gupta. So from Benadryl you started using other medications? I mean, you're still pretty young. I mean, how—if you don't mind me asking, how did you even gain access to some of these other drugs at that age?

Mr. Riley. Very typical, from—at least where I grew up. I mean, I grew up in Greeley, Colorado, a great rural community. And amazing parents, amazing family, but it's pretty commonplace to have alcohol and other drugs in the home. My parents raised me exceptionally well, but that feeling of inadequacy, searching for something to fill that space, was pretty strong for me.

Dr. Gupta. You eventually were in recovery, and you were in and out of recovery seven times is my understanding.

Mr. Riley. Yes.

Dr. Gupta. Can you tell me about the first time? How—did you pursue it on your own? Was your family—did they help nurture this for you?

Mr. Riley. I think the true first attempt at recovery for me—which was to no surprise when you have such an amazing family and parents—was, my parents took me to my pediatrician. And they said, Luke—they call me by my middle name—Luke is struggling. He's doing the sports thing, doing, like, leadership stuff in school, but we found out that he's been drinking. Instead of water in his Nalgene for tennis practice, there's vodka in there. What are we going to do about that?

And culturally—which I think speaks to what we brought up earlier and what you articulated so well—was, culturally speaking, that bias or that lack of understanding that there's got to be something bigger going on here, before this gets into what we now know today is proportions of an epidemic, but it was chalked up to boys will be boys. And it was one of those very rare moments when I decided to be open and honest around some of the things that I were doing. But again, having—and I mean, it's a pediatrician, right? I mean, I'm not a doctor, clearly—[*laughter*]—but very, very much a—almost without knowledge. I mean, there was just nothing that that doctor at that point in time could do other than, well, you know, he's doing good in sports, doing good in school, I'm sure this good-looking young guy will be okay. And that wasn't the case.

Dr. Gupta. You weren't okay, I mean, clearly, from what you're describing. How bad did things get for you?

Mr. Riley. Bad, to me, is a very relative term. I've met a lot of individuals that went through things that I—that frankly, I don't know if I could have gone through. But for me, what—again, even more so than how bad did it get or how many stories could I go into to articulate the hopelessness or the things that my family went through, is truly again the reverse of that—the recovery, the power of those stories of when I did start to get well. And when I was allowed to be in my parents' home, when my father was the best man in my wedding, when my dad called me when I was a couple years into recovery, and he said, because of what you have done, I want to be in recovery. And he's still in recovery to this day. And those stories to me——

Drug Treatment and Prevention Efforts/Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act/Insurance Coverage for Drug Treatment Programs

The President. And, Sanjay, maybe I can just interject, because I'm listening to Justin's story, and when I was a kid, I was—how would I put it?—not always as responsible as I am today. [*Laughter*] And in many ways, I was lucky because, for whatever reason, addiction didn't get its claws in me, with the exception of cigarettes, which I—is obviously a major addiction, but doesn't manifest itself in some of the same ways.

But I think that part of Justin's point is really powerful, which is, we live in a society where we medicate a lot of problems and we self-medicate a lot of problems. And the connection between mental health, drug abuse, is powerful. Anxiety, folks who are trying to figure out coping skills, we have an entire industry that says, we're going to help you self-medicate. And the line between alcoholism, which is legal, and folks who are taking Vicodin and then on to harder illegal substances isn't always that sharp, particularly among children.

So one of the conclusions that we came to is that it's important for our health system to be addressing wellness in a way that prepares doctors, provides resources, insurance policies, all that can help with these issues, as opposed to, if you have a broken arm you get treatment, but if you've got significant depression that you may be masking through alcohol or through opioids, then you're not getting treatment.

And one of the things that we tried to do through the Affordable Care Act was insist on parity in insurance policies. One of the steps that we're now taking in response to the opioid epidemic is to really ratchet up the guidelines

that we're providing to insurers so that if that young lady that Leana was talking about comes in, if she has insurance, that, in fact, that it's treated as a disease and it's covered; and Medicaid and Medicare start really taking parity seriously so that mental health issues and addiction issues are treated as a disease in the same way that if somebody came in with a serious medical illness that it's treated the same.

Dr. Gupta. Mr. President, so can you give a little bit more detail on that? Because people talk about mental health parity and they say this has been around for some time but the impact has not been felt the way that a lot of people would like to feel it. What will the Task Force be able to do that hasn't already been done?

The President. Well, the goal of the Task Force is to essentially develop a set of tools, guidelines, mechanisms so that it's actually enforced, that the concept is not just a phrase—an empty phrase—but, as a practical matter, if you're trying to get a provider for treatment, they may or may not get reimbursed, but there's a consistency in terms of how we approach the problem.

And when it comes to Medicaid and Medicare, obviously, there are guidelines, because that's a Government program that we can provide. When it comes to how we oversee the parity provisions in the Affordable Care Act, we've got to let the insurance carriers know that we're serious about this. And this is where, though, the public education and employer education around these issues is very important as well.

Because 85 percent of folks still get their health insurance through their job, through their employer. And for business owners, for companies to recognize that they are much better off making—checking and pressing their insurer to see that, in fact, mental health and substance abuse parity does, in fact, exist, they will save money, their workers will be more productive, and they'll be getting more bang for their insurance buck. That's all part of the approach that I think we can take and we've got to carry through over the next several years.

Dr. Gupta. Thank you.

Crystal, I—when we spoke earlier, you talked about the fact that you wanted to describe to the President some of what you experienced in the criminal justice system. And I think what you were talking about was the—some of the stigma you faced. I wonder if you could, again, describe some of your experiences and what that stigma really felt like.

Ms. Oertle. Well, I—the place where I go for my counseling, I talk to a lot of people that are on probation. And the probation officers don't treat them like they have a disease and the medication is something that's treating their disease. They don't want them to be on it, and they don't understand. I don't think they have enough education. It's great to hear the President say the "disease of addiction." That's wonderful. [*Applause*] Yes. But there still is a stigma. For me, even coming here—and nobody here treated me bad or anything, but it's in the back of my mind.

The President. They better not have or I—somebody treats Crystal bad, you've got to talk to me. And I've got Secret Service, I've got the U.S. Armed Forces. [*Laughter*] Don't mess with her. I'm teasing. Okay.

Ms. Oertle. But it is in the back of my mind, like, I'm not worthy, to be really honest.

The President. Yes.

Dr. Gupta. Criminal justice parole officers, counselors? I mean, was this——

Ms. Oertle. Yes. Some doctors even. One doctor I went to—and I talked to some of your people today about the Parity Act. I don't have a problem with it now. Everything is paid for. I'm on Medicaid. But I have gone to doctors before that would only take cash. And they haven't been nice. I've had a couple really nasty incidences with things that the doctors even said about another patient in treatment, and I just want that——

The President. That's discouraging.

Ms. Oertle. Yes, yes.

Dr. Gupta. Doctor Wen?

Dr. Wen. What you're describing is so unfortunate, but it's so prevalent. When we talk about, for example, Naloxone, the overdose medication, there are people who would ques-

tion whether giving someone Naloxone will make them more likely to use drugs. But we would never say that about somebody who has a peanut allergy. We wouldn't say, oh, we're not going to give you an Epi-Pen, because it might make you eat more peanuts next time. [*Laughter*] Right? I mean—[*applause*].

And we see that stigma in Baltimore, where I am. And we're coming up to now a year post the unrest in our city, and often it's tempting to look at what happened in our city as what's in front of us, which is angry young people committing acts of violence. But then if we look just one step deeper, we see what's resulted in deep poverty and deep disparities from our policies of mass incarceration and mass arrest.

I mean, we have a city—if we look at the numbers in our city, we have 73,000 arrests made every year in a city of 620,000. And when we look at our individuals who are in our jails, 4 out of 10 have a diagnosed mental illness; 8 out of 10 use illegal substances. So we are criminalizing people without giving them the reentry resources to get their lives back in order. We're treating addiction differently from any other disease.

Dr. Gupta. You provided your own name as a doctor at all the pharmacies, I understand, in Baltimore, a certain area, so that anybody going in could get their Narcan, their Naloxone, if they wanted. Is that right?

Dr. Wen. That's right. So we issued a standing order in the city, which—[*applause*]. We strongly believe that everyone should save a life; that it's not just first responders—which is very important. We actually started training our police as well. And within 6 months, our police officers have saved the lives of 21 citizens. So that's very important.

But we also believe that if it's true that addiction does not discriminate—and it does not—if it's true that anyone can die from overdose—and I've treated 2-year-olds who have accidentally taken their parents' medications, I've treated 75-year-olds who are on prescription drugs—I mean, if it's true that any of this disease can affect everyone, then we should all be able to save a life.

And so I issued the standing order. And now anyone who takes a very short training—they can get training at a street corner, public market, public housing, in jails—if they do a short training, they can get a prescription in my name. So 620,000 residents of our city have access to Naloxone.

Drug Treatment and Prevention Efforts/Criminal Justice Reform/Pain Management Practices

Dr. Gupta. Wow. That's great. That's what a solution looks like, right?

Mr. President, Dr. Wen brought up this point, and I think it's an interesting one. It's this idea that if you provide Narcan, Naloxone, more widely, do people feel like, look, I've got a safety net now, I may be more likely to continue using heroin, for example? Syringe service programs, are they more likely to enable or foster continued usage of these drugs? Do these discussions come up as part of trying to pass some of these recommendations?

The President. These discussions come up. The good news, I think, is that we base our guidance and our policy on science. And when you look at the science, there's no evidence that because of a syringe exchange program or Naloxone, that that is thereby an incentive for people to get addicted to drugs. That's not the dynamic that's taking place.

This is a straightforward proposition: How do we save lives once people are addicted so that they have a chance to recover? It doesn't do us much good to talk about recovery after folks are dead. And if we can save a life when they are in medical crisis, then we now are in a position to make sure that they can also recover so long as the treatment programs are available.

And I think what Leana said with respect to our populations in prison and the lack of systematic programming for them and support when they get out is a critical issue. Because if somebody has gone to jail for a nonviolent drug offense, and they are not getting treated and provided with some baseline of skills and some hand-holding when they are released, they are going to get back into trouble. That's just human nature. And if we're being smart on

crime, and not just thinking in terms of sound bites, then this is going to be an area where we provide more resources. And the Department of Justice is working very closely with our Office of Drug Policy to find ways that we can improve, at the Federal level, reentry programs, drug treatment, and so forth.

Now, keep in mind that the vast majority of the criminal justice system is a State-based justice system. The Federal Government is not responsible for the majority of drug laws, the majority of incarcerations, or how the reentry works upon release. What we are hoping, though, is if we model best practices based on evidence, that more and more States will adopt it. And there's an incentive for States to start doing so, and that is cost. If you can reduce the amount of recidivism, then you are saving money. If an individual—like a young man I met in Camden who was in prison for drug offenses for a decade—comes out, gets treatment, gets support, and gets training, and is now an EMT for the State of New Jersey, that's—[*applause*]—and now is paying taxes and supporting himself and potentially supporting a family, that's good for everybody. But that requires a certain amount of foresight in terms of how we're approaching this problem generally.

And the same is true, by the way, preventing people from getting addicted in the first place. I don't want to—as we're properly talking about recovery—because we've heard powerful stories from Crystal and Justin, and they're inspirations for people who are watching, and I could not be prouder of them sharing their stories—what we also want to make sure of is, is that a third-grader has support that doesn't make him feel the need to engage in this kind of more destructive behavior.

And that is something—we've got two doctors on this panel so maybe they can address it. But as a layperson who's studied this, we have a health care system that too often is really a disease care system. We wait until people get sick, and then we treat them. And we don't spend enough time thinking about how do we keep people well and healthy and balanced and centered in the first place.

And that requires, I think, a reimagining of how our health system works. Very specifically, when it comes to opioids, the training of doctors for pain and pain relief and how they help their patients manage pain, this is an area where I was shocked to learn how little time residents in medical schools were spending just trying to figure this stuff out. It is not emphasized. It's not considered prestigious or trendy to think about how are you managing pain with your patients.

And the good news is, part of this initiative that we've got moving, we've got 60 medical schools who have signed up and who are announcing today that they are going to make pain relief a major part of their curriculums, a major part of how they train their doctors so that we are thinking about this in a much more—[*applause*].

Dr. Gupta. It's really stunning, Mr. President. And I'll tell you, it seemed like for a period of time—and, Dr. Wen, you can share your experiences—that pain relief was talked about a lot, but only in the context of giving out drugs. The literature would all suggest, if you look back at those small reports, that there was no concern for addiction. And every single time someone came into an emergency room, even for a non-pain-related thing, they would be asked about pain and perhaps given narcotics.

Eighty percent of the world's pain pills are consumed in the United States. We are 5 percent of the world's population; we take 80 percent of the world's pain pills. We don't have 80 percent of the world's pain, my guess. What do you think, Doctor Wen? How did we—how did that happen?

Dr. Wen. I think two things happened. One is that drug companies very aggressively—and I don't know if it's knowingly or not—but they misled and marketed pain pills to physicians and patients. And we then developed this culture also of a pill for every pain. If I fall down, I bruise my knee, I may not need opioids. I'm sure I do not need opioids. But somehow, we have said that our goal is to make people pain-free.

And so I've worked with many great doctors. I've had—I trained with many fantastic people, including Doctor Murthy, our Surgeon General. And I had—I know that doctors are trying to do the right thing. We're not trying to get our patients addicted to medications. We're not trying to get them to switch to heroin later. We need the resources to help us to then support us, whether they are the guidelines as issued by the CDC, or whether they are other efforts by our medical societies to assist us to make better decisions for our patients.

But we also need our patients and we need society to change too. Because if I talk to one of our students in Baltimore City and I ask them, is heroin good or bad, they're going to say heroin is bad. But if they see that every time that they're acting out in class that they get diagnosed with attention deficit disorder and they get a pill or they see that their parents are in pain for—maybe they sprained their back, and they see their parents getting a whole month's supply of Oxycodone—I mean, this is the culture of excess that has to change.

The President. Yes, yes.

Dr. Gupta. That's a great point.

Overuse of Antibiotics

The President. That is a great point. Sanjay, that's what I mean about us reimagining how we think about health and wellness.

There's a good analogy to this, and that is, in the whole field of antibiotics, where—one of the things that we're spending a lot of time with my team at NIH and CDC and FDA—we have to worry about is the fact that antibiotics, which are one of the great breakthroughs of mankind and saves billions of lives because of their existence, are becoming less effective because every time somebody's got a cold—and I've been guilty about this as a parent. I don't like seeing Malia or Sasha sick, and so I go to the doc, and I say, well, can't we do something for her? And sometimes, it's just a cold, and an antibiotic is not going to work. But the overprescription of antibiotics has led to increased resistance among the bacteria that need to be treated.

And so the doctor is right. We have to have a change in the medical profession and the drug companies, and we have to hold them more accountable. We, as consumers and as parents, have to be more accountable, as well, in terms of how we approach keeping our families well in order for us to be able to prevent this massive gateway into addiction that can cause real problems.

Dr. Gupta. And I should point out, because you mentioned—Dr. Frieden is here from the CDC. The CDC has released some of these new guidelines regarding opioid prescriptions saying that, look, pretty plainly stated, as far as—I listened to you closely—saying that these opiates should not be a first-line treatment for chronic pain. And that's not the way the medical culture has thought about this for some time. The FDA now talking about black-box warnings on these medications as well to say there is a risk of abuse, of addiction, and even death from these things. So there are some solutions, some things that are changing as a result.

One of the things you said, Mr. President, was this idea that the substances didn't get "claws" in you, is what you said.

And I want to ask you, Justin, about that. We know how everybody in this room feels about addiction as a brain disease, but that's still a hotly contested topic. Outside of this room, people talk about the fact that, is this a choice? Is this—is there a component of moral failure? All those things. Your experience, and also how do you counsel the people and—Young People in Recovery, the organization?

Mr. Riley. Really glad you asked this question. So I'm certainly not, again, a doctor. That's—my sister is the doctor. I'm not an expert. I study, just try to be fully aware of what's going on everywhere with the different ways in which the claws thing happens and can relate to that personally. But what I really am, what I would consider myself an expert in is opportunity and hope.

And so the question—I'll start with one of the statements that you said, Mr. President, which this is good for everybody. This isn't like one of those things that we're talking about

that impacts a very small amount of people. And even if it was, that's always good that we're trying to help anybody that we can.

But since I'm not an expert when it comes to disease, not a disease, choice, not a choice, I really try to, and will here publicly completely, step aside from that conversation, because that isn't my role or even our organization's role to have that discussion from a medical perspective.

But what we will say, and the results that we have seen all over the country through our chapters and leaders all over, is that if given the opportunity—and so this is something that, I mean, I'm very excited to be able to share this, because this is something that I genuinely believe if you are or ever have been a person, you can relate to this—[*laughter*]—is that whether you may have made some choices that you weren't proud of, that maybe there were some choices and you said maybe I shouldn't have done that, or maybe even something happened to you that was out of your direct sphere of control and influence, you can relate to the fact that, you know, if somebody just gave me a real shot at this and an opportunity—I may not even know how I got to this situation or how these claws came here, whether somebody clawed into me or I even did this to myself—but instead of focusing on that or being able to medically speak to that, the—I think the real opportunity is the opportunity—I mean, isn't—that's what this country is supposed to be about, right? Giving people an opportunity to get the resources and the tools that they need so they can and will and do recover all over the place.

Drug Addiction/Drug Treatment and Prevention Efforts

The President. Okay, the—just to pick up on what Justin said, as I said, I was lucky. I don't know why. Friends of mine who ended up battling addiction were not less worthy or morally—more morally suspect than I was. For whatever reason, things broke that way. But I think Justin's point is correct, which is, regardless of how you—how individuals get into these situations—and we don't know all—everything. There may end up being genetic components to how susceptible you are to addiction, and addictions may be different for different people. What we do know is that there are steps that can be taken that will help people battle through addiction and get on to the other side, and right now that's underresourced.

And what we also know is that there are steps that we as a society could take that would help young people adjust and adapt to a rapidly changing and sometimes confusing world in a way that's healthier rather than more destructive.

And it is affecting everybody. We do know that if you are poor, you are more vulnerable. You don't have the same antibodies to protect yourself. You don't get the same second chances. And so part of the goal, hopefully, coming out of this conference is, is that because opioids affect everyone, but speak to a broader issue of how do we treat addiction generally, that we as a society, as a whole, are paying attention to what's going on in our own kids' lives, but we're also paying attention to children who have a lot less resources than you or my children do.

Because, lo and behold, it turns out that if there's a market for heroin in an inner city in Baltimore, it's not going to take that long before those drugs find their way to a wealthy suburb outside of Baltimore. And I now have kids in high school, and I am well aware that their access to—their ability to access legal or illegal substances is very high. They are just less likely to get in trouble, get thrown in jail, and have a permanent felony record than the kids who live in those inner cities.

But again, to use the analogy, we care a lot about making sure no children in America have tuberculosis, because if a child has tuberculosis and is poor, at some point, they can give my child, who's well-to-do, tuberculosis. And the same is true for addiction. It has an impact that can run through society as a whole, and that's what we've got to pay attention to.

Dr. Gupta. Justin.

Mr. Riley. I think you're—obviously, you're absolutely correct. [*Laughter*] But truly, though, I mean—right? [*Laughter*]

The President. Let me just say that I am in Washington, DC, and that is rarely said to me. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Riley. There you go.

The President. Hal Rogers, I just want you to take note of what—[*laughter*].

Mr. Riley. So to continue to put a bow on the correctness, if you will, is, you know what—again, you are absolutely correct. What I've also found, though, is that it's even more though. I used to think—and even I think my family went through, well, what do we do? Tell me what to do for him. If we did this or if we did that, will the result change? And where we're at with what we do know and what the experts are telling us is that it's not an either-or solution here. This is an all. It is time for the country to go all in on this, that this isn't just simply just prevention or treatment or recovery, but it is everything.

And it is—I mean, for us, the way that we talk about—you asked, which is why I wanted to pipe back in, right—is that what do we do with our members? Right? I mean, what are we doing that is so exceptionally, extraordinarily different than other places? And it's because we're empowering them and we are equipping them.

They—I was asked for the briefing before all this stuff, what's that thing that changed for you? Because I was given great opportunities. I was given amazing, different types of programs and treatment. But it was in a single moment in time when somebody looked eyeball to eyeball with me and said, you have value; that regardless of maybe some of the choices you made, whether you put those claws there, whether somebody else did, is that you have value. And one day, you've got a lot to learn and you've got to listen and stop talking so fast—[*laughter*]—but you've got to focus up, and you have to know that you have value so you can give other people hope and help equip them and empower them.

And the way that we do that is through employment, housing, education, and other recovery-related resources. And those first three—that is not unique to young people or even when I was even younger, right—or people of any age or of any recovery pathway. Those are things that individuals—all individuals in this country need.

And when we start to have that conversation, of that's how we go all in, and we support adequate recovery resources and employment, housing, and educational resources. We can do this thing together.

The President. That's good.

Drug Treatment and Prevention Efforts/Insurance Coverage for Drug Treatment Programs

Dr. Gupta. That's—I'm so glad you said that, because it's not a—this is a multidimensional issue and we have to address all these things.

I want to ask almost about the next step. And this is s a story, Mr. President, I know is very personal to you, the story of Jennifer Grubb. Somebody goes in, they've gone through recovery now, they're in recovery, and they go in the hospital for something unrelated, and they're given a prescription for narcotics, for opiates again. They tell the doctors, look, I'm a drug addict, I cannot take this stuff. If I do, I'll be right back on the road to addiction again and I could even die. That is what happened with Jennifer Grubb. Mr. President, the stigma exists at all levels, even within the medical establishment. After someone has been treated, someone is in recovery, even then, "Eh, you'll be fine, I'll still give you these opiate pain medications."

The President. Well, this is where the training of the medical community comes in. There's been some controversy in this discussion around making this education mandatory, and I think the medical community worries about their independence over regulation of the medical communities. We have been getting some good volunteer efforts going, and I applaud those. We have to see how good the take-up is, because if in fact the training is not sufficient, then we may have to take a look at the possibilities of mandatory training.

I will tell you that within the Federal Government, for example, we have said, if you're going to treat somebody who is a Federal employee or part of the Federal health insurance

program, you need to get trained. And so far, I think we have about 75 percent of the medical community that treats Federal employees. I was able to do that through an executive action.

But I'd just go back to Crystal's point. I don't want Crystal—if she is ready to get treatment and to do right by her kids, I want somebody who is fully supportive, who she is interacting with on day one. I don't want somebody who has got an attitude. I don't want somebody who is misinformed. I don't want somebody who is not familiar with the best options that are available. I want somebody who is going to embrace her and say, let's go, let's see what we can do for you.

And I want to make sure that those doctors, and perhaps nurses as well, because in some communities, there aren't going to be enough doctors, and one of the issues that we have to address is, can we use—and I just happen to love nurses as a general rule, because they are overworked, underpaid, and are really just the foundation for so much of our health care system. But all the providers, I want to make sure that they're getting the resources and the reimbursements through—whether it's third-party insurance or Medicaid or Medicare, in order for them to be able to do right by Crystal.

Because it's hard. And when somebody is ready to make that change, I want somebody to be right there with them, welcoming them, not turning them away.

Dr. Wen. And, Mr. President, I would also add that we need people like Crystal and Justin and other people in recovery working as well——

Mr. Riley. There you go.

Dr. Wen. ——and specifically, working with individuals with addiction. In Baltimore—so I'm very proud to represent the Baltimore City Health Department, and on behalf of our mayor, Mayor Rawlings-Blake, as well, who really care about addiction as a public health issue. And we have individuals in our health department working at 24 needle exchange sites across the city. And—which, our needle exchange program—I'll tell you one statistic that continues to really surprise me, but also this is why we do the work that we do—the percentage of individuals with HIV from IV drug use has decreased from 64 percent in 2000 to 8 percent in 2014.

And these individuals who work on our needle exchange vans, most of them are in long-term recovery themselves. And for them to say to people coming—to their clients and patients coming that you should think about quitting, and this is what we can do, we can help you with it, we can guide you through—that's so much more powerful than me as a doctor saying to someone that recovery is possible.

And we do the same thing when it comes to violence prevention as well. We also believe that violence, just like addiction, just like other diseases, can spread. So we have a program in our city called Safe Streets that actually came from Chicago—from Chicago's Cure Violence program—where we hire individuals who were recently incarcerated, who were recently released from incarceration to walk the streets of Baltimore and interrupt violence. And these people are true heroes, and we need to find a way to reimburse and pay for peer-recovery specialists, who are the most credible messengers, who have walked in the shoes.

Mr. Riley. Yes.

Dr. Gupta. Justin.

Mr. Riley. You're also 100-percent correct. [*Laughter*] But really, we've seen—that excitement, that person that you described, Mr. President, that when they're ready to get help, I mean, imagine them meeting me. I mean, if I can't encourage you, your encourager is broken. You meet me on your day of need and help and you meet other young people and other people who are in recovery that have walked that journey—who better to do that along with other professionals?

Again, it's not either-or. It isn't just simply now only fund peers. It is also fund massive and massive amounts of them. And one of our recent success stories is, we said a long time ago—and, again, I'm going to go back to that blunt thing—is we decided to say we're just going to put our money where our mouth is and we're going to be the solution, in the meantime, until all these policies change.

And so what our chapter leaders and members have been doing is, they've been providing those direct services and hosting our recovery support meetings, helping build recovery schools, collegiate recovery communities. And that action has been able to attract enough attention, because we're doing it, we're not waiting for things to change. Our amazing leaders are literally changing the communities, regardless of buy-in stigma, bias, or straight-out discrimination against our own population.

But what has happened is, even big insurance companies and other providers have come up and said, we will literally even pay you to further build out your own infrastructure, to put chapters around our communities. And this is a win-win. Again, this is good for everybody. So now Big Insurance says, we're going to pay you to go do what you were already going to do anyway. It helps the people in recovery. It helps the people that need recovery. And we're saving a ton of money—not like Geico—but, like, insurance because we're making sure that we're getting the money and the cost savings back because they're not going through that system again and again and again.

If we equip and empower, and not handcuff and jail, people that are not well, and we focus on their wellness, that's part of the change.

Drug Treatment and Prevention Efforts/Insurance Coverage for Drug Treatment Programs

Dr. Gupta. Pardon me, Mr. President. There's a lot of things that were announced today that are going to be part of this $1 billion, 1.1 billion that are spent. Is there a way to describe—now that you've heard Crystal's story, for example—a way to describe how her life will change, or a future Crystal's life would be different?

The President. Well, first of all, the $1.1 billion is not yet allocated by Congress.

Dr. Gupta. Oh, yes. [*Laughter*]

The President. So I want to be very clear about that. We've been able to reallocate some existing dollars for, for example, the community health centers. But this is still an area that's grossly underresourced. So we're going to have to work with Congressman Rogers and other Members of Congress to support policies that they've already embraced, that's already reflected in legislation. But the way Congress works, sometimes, they'll say this is a good idea, but until the money comes through, it's just that: just an idea. It doesn't actually get done.

Crystal, remind me where you live. Where were you during this time where you entered into recovery?

Ms. Oertle. In Ohio.

The President. In Ohio. Was it——

Ms. Oertle. I live in Shelby, Ohio.

The President. Was it—is it more of a rural area?

Ms. Oertle. Where I live is, yes.

The President. The—I mean, one of the ways I would hope it would change—and I don't know how easy or difficult it was for you to identify when you were ready to really make a change, where you could get treatment, and how long the waits were—but I think the most basic thing that I'd like to see is that there is greater coverage of terrific programs like Justin is describing, good work that's being done by Leana in Baltimore. I want to make sure that there's sufficient coverage everywhere.

Part of what is troubling about the opioids epidemic is that we're seeing significantly higher spikes in rural areas. And part of that is because there has been a lot of underresourcing of treatment facilities, mental health facilities. There may be, in some of those cases, more stigma than there might be in big cities about getting help. If you're in a small town, everybody kind of knows you; you may be more hesitant, right? I don't know if that's an experience that you felt.

Ms. Oertle. Yes, definitely.

The President. If you're in Manhattan, and you're going to get treatment, people are more—may be more familiar with it. So part of what I think our goal is, is to make sure that we have, in counties all across the country, at least some resources that can get things started. Because as great as the work that Justin is doing, volunteer organizations are not going to be able to do it all.

And I want to emphasize: There's wonderful work being done by the nonprofit sector and the philanthropic center, and we applaud that. For some, a faith-based approach is going to be critical to being able to get the wherewithal and the courage to be able to get through this thing. And obviously, traditional recovery programs have emphasized a higher power, and so there are a lot of great work that's being done in churches and synagogues and temples and mosques all across the country on this issue.

Audience member. Amen!

The President. Say again? Got an amen! The—[*laughter*].

But ultimately, if we're going to get coverage everywhere, then we've got to have government help. Community health centers are a very efficient way to do it, but they're—we have to make sure that local hospitals, individual providers, insurance companies, Medicaid expansion are all part of this as well.

And this takes me back to why I pushed so hard for the Affordable Care Act. I know it's been controversial. I understand. I understand the politics of it. But the main goal is to make sure that if you don't have health insurance on your job—which 85 percent of the American people do—but at any given time, somebody who might previously have had health insurance on the job lose their job or are between jobs or are going back to school or are starting a small business—that in those circumstances, you've got some access to prevention; you've got some access to doctors; you've got some access to treatment if you end up being addicted. You have the ability if you've got some pain not to just rely on a one-time bottle of pills, but a doctor who knows your health history and is working with you and can take you aside and say, you know what, Crystal, I've known you since you were X, or I helped deliver your baby, and let me just give you some advice here. I really think that you're going to be better off, even though it's going to be a little tough going through rehab on your shoulder, as opposed to taking a pill—you've got to have a relationship with a wellness system.

And the problem is, there's still a lot of gaps, especially in rural communities, where that doesn't exist. We—even within the VA system, which has coverage all across the country. Typically, some of the biggest problems we have with the VA is in rural areas, where you've got to drive 2 hours or 3 hours to get treatment for any kind of medical problem. And it discourages people from using it. They start feeling isolated and they start self-medicating. And we see a lot of our veterans coming back self-medicating because they're not—they don't have easily accessible treatment facilities.

Money is not the entire issue. Very rarely is money the solution alone. There's got to be passion that Justin displays. There's got to be the stories that Crystal shares. There's got to be great dedication and professionalism like Leana. But money helps. [*Laughter*] And without it, without the government, without us, collectively, as a society, making this commitment, what we will repeatedly end up with is being penny wise and pound foolish.

It is so much more expensive for us not to make these front-end investments, because we end up with jails full of folks who can't function when they get out. We end up with people's lives being shattered, folks not being as productive on the job, children then suffering from some of the problems of parents who are going through issues. That affects their schoolwork. That, in turn, has an impact on our economy as a whole.

It's just smarter for us to do the right thing on the front end. And I hope that this conference will help underscore that. And I appreciate everybody's great work in highlighting it.

Dr. Gupta. Mr. President, thank you very much.

The President. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:27 p.m. in the Duncan Theater at AmericasMart Building 2. In his remarks, he referred to Zachary Jones, son of Mayor Danny Jones of Charleston, WV; Jacob Kessler, son of West Virginia Senate Minority Leader Jeffrey Kessler; former State Sen. David Grubb of West Virginia; Essex County, NJ, resident Dquan Rosario, a former participant in the Department of Justice's "Re-New" prisoner reentry program in Newark, NJ;

and Michael P. Botticelli, Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; and the Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Task Force established by the related memorandum signed on March 29, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. Dr. Gupta referred to former Sen. Grubb's daughter Jessica Grubb, who died on March 2.

Statement on the Resignation of David Medine as Chairman of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board
March 29, 2016

I am deeply appreciative of David Medine's skilled stewardship of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board (PCLOB), which he has led since 2013 as the first full-time Chairman. David has served our Nation as PCLOB Chairman during an especially momentous period, coinciding with a concerted examination of our national security tools and policies to ensure they are consistent with my administration's commitment to civil liberties and individual privacy. Under David's leadership, the PCLOB's thoughtful analysis and considered input has consistently informed my decisionmaking and that of my team, and our country is better off because of it. There is no question that David Medine is as talented and dedicated a public servant as they come, and I thank him and wish him well as he prepares for the next chapter.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Significant Cyber-Enabled Activities
March 29, 2016

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13694 of April 1, 2015, is to continue in effect beyond April 1, 2016.

Significant malicious cyber-enabled activities originating from, or directed by persons located, in whole or in substantial part, outside the United States, continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13694 with respect to significant malicious cyber-enabled activities.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Paul D. Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at an Easter Prayer Breakfast
March 30, 2016

Vice President Joe Biden. Good morning, everyone. This is——

Audience members. Good morning!

Vice President Biden. This is one of our favorite events. And it's an honor to be with so many faith leaders and lay faithful this one last time for Easter in the White House—with us, anyway. And——

Audience members. No.

Vice President Biden. Well, I'll tell you what, it's been a great honor. It's been a great honor. He's not bad to work for either, you know what I mean? [*Laughter*]

My wife Jill, whenever she wants to make sure I get the message that she wants to deliver to me that morning, literally, she tapes it on the mirror while I'm shaving. [*Laughter*] You think I'm joking. I'm not joking. And about a year and a half ago—a little longer, actually, almost 2 years ago—she taped a quote on my mirror at home in Wilmington, which is still there, and it's a quote from Kierkegaard. He said, "Faith sees best in the dark." Faith sees best in the dark. And all of you know better than anyone that faith is a gift from God. And because faith works best when you know the least. Faith works best when you're most frightened, in my view. And faith works best when you're not exactly sure where to go.

And I know there's a lot of fear and unease around the world. The President and I travel around the world a lot, and all you got to do is just look at the recent attacks in Belgium and Turkey and Pakistan. And while fear is understandable, exploiting that fear is absolutely unacceptable.

Audience members. Right!

Vice President Biden. When innocent people are ostracized simply because of their faith, when we turn our backs on the victims of evil and persecution, it's just wrong.

So it's up to us—and you've been the leaders in this country—to recognize that fear, but also try to allay that fear and to help people understand that what unites us is a lot more than what divides us. And it's embodied in just not what we believe, but what we say.

We all practice the same basic faith, but different faiths. I happen to be a practicing Catholic, and I grew up learning from the nuns and the priests who taught me what we used to call Catholic social doctrine. And—but it's not fundamentally different than a doctrine of any of the great confessional faiths. It's, what you do to the least among us, you do unto me. It's, we have an obligation to one another. It's, we cannot serve ourselves at the expense of others and that we have a responsibility to future generations.

All faiths have a version of these teachings, and we all practice and preach that we should practice what we say: opening doors to the victims of war, as the President has been trying to do, a war of terrorism and oppression; accepting people of all faiths and respecting their right to practice their religion as they choose or choose not to practice any religion; resisting the urge to let our fears overcome what we value most: our openness, our freedom, and our freedom to practice our faith.

And a faith that sees and shines light in dark moments is what you've preached. And my favorite hymn in my church is based on the 91st Psalm, Mr. President. It's "On Eagle's Wings." And it's my wish for all of you. You may remember the refrain. It says: "He will raise you up on eagle's wings, and bear you on the breath of dawn. Make you to shine like the Sun, and hold you in the palm of His hand."

That's my wish for all of you because we desperately need you at this time to reinforce a sense of confidence and faith in the American people, to appear—to appeal, as Lincoln said, to their better angels.

And I'm grateful to have stood by someone these last 7 years who understands this—and I mean this—understands it to his core. It's stamped in his DNA. It's who he is. I've served with eight Presidents; I've never been with anyone who has more character than this man and has faith.

So, ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce you to my friend and yours: the President of the United States, Barack Obama.

The President. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Well, good morning, everybody.

Audience members. Good morning!

The President. Welcome to the White House. It is so good to be with you again. We had to change up the format a little bit because I think I've got 30 world leaders for dinner tomorrow—[*laughter*]—in an effort to constrain the threat of nuclear materials getting into the wrong hands. So it's a good cause. [*Laughter*] But when you have folks over—I'm sure all of you have the same experience—you've got to clean up—[*laughter*]—do a little vacuuming, make sure that, you know—[*laughter*]. Well, for those of you who have kids, make sure that they didn't do something when you weren't looking that the guests will discover. [*Laughter*] Some vegetables they didn't want to eat. [*Laughter*]

So we're not at our usual round table of fellowship, but the spirit is still here. And I know that I speak for all of you in feeling lucky that we've had such an extraordinary Vice President in Joe Biden, whose faith has been tested time and time again, and has been able to find God in places that sometimes, for a lot of us, is hard to see.

Audience members. Right.

The President. So I'm blessed to have him as a friend as well as a colleague.

This is a little bittersweet: my final Easter Prayer Breakfast as President. So I want to begin by thanking all of you for all your prayers over the year. I know they have kept us going. It has meant so much to me. It's meant so much to my family. I want to thank you most of all for the incredible ministries that you're doing all around the country, because we've had a chance to work together and partner with you, and we have seen the good works—the deeds and not just words—that so many of you have carried out.

And since 2010, this has become a cherished tradition. I know all of you have had a very busy Holy Week and the week leading up to Holy Week and the week before that. [*Laughter*] And I had a wonderful Easter morning at the Alfred Street Baptist Church, and I want to thank Pastor Wesley for his leadership. Pastor, outstanding sermon.

The—he was telling a few stories of his youth, talking about going to the club. [*Laughter*] I'm just saying. [*Laughter*] And since he's also from Chicago, I knew the club he was talking about. [*Laughter*] But it all led to a celebration of the resurrection, I want to be clear. [*Laughter*] There was a——

Vice President Biden. Actually, it was a resurrection.

The President. It started with the club, but it ended up with the resurrection. [*Laughter*]

And his outstanding and handsome young sons are with him here. And so we want to thank him for an outstanding service.

Here at the White House, we have not had to work as hard as all of you, but we did have to deal with the Easter Egg Roll. [*Laughter*] Imagine thousands and thousands of children hopped up on sugar—[*laughter*]—running around your backyard, surrounded by mascots and Muppets and Shaquille O'Neal. [*Laughter*] For 12 hours. [*Laughter*] That was my Easter weekend. [*Laughter*] So we set aside this morning to come together in prayer and reflection and quiet. [*Laughter*]

Now, as Joe said, in light of recent events, this gathering takes on more meaning. Around the world, we have seen horrific acts of terrorism, most recently Brussels, as well as what happened in Pakistan: innocent families, mostly women and children, Christians and Muslims. And so our prayers are with the victims, their families, the survivors of these cowardly attacks.

And as Joe mentioned, these attacks can foment fear and division. They can tempt us to cast out the stranger, strike out against those who don't look like us or pray exactly as we do. And they can lead us to turn our backs on those who are most in need of help and refuge. That's the intent of the terrorists, is to weaken our faith, to weaken our best impulses, our better angels.

And Pastor preached on this this weekend, and I know all of you did too, as I suspect, or in your own quiet ways were reminded if Easter means anything, it's that you don't have to be afraid. We drown out darkness with light——

Audience members. That's right.

The President. And we heal hatred with love.

Audience members. Yes.

The President. And we hold on to hope. And we think about all that Jesus suffered and sacrificed on our behalf: scorned, abandoned, shunned, nail-scarred hands bearing the injustice of his death and carrying the sins of the world.

And it's difficult to fathom the full meaning of that act. Now, Scripture tells us, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Because of God's love, we can proclaim, "Christ is risen!"

Audience members. Yes.

The President. Because of God's love, we have been given this gift of salvation. Because of Him, our hope is not misplaced, and we don't have to be afraid.

And as Christians have said through the years, "We are Easter people, and Alleluia is our song!" We are Easter people, people of hope and not fear.

Now, this is not a static hope. This is a living and breathing hope. It's not a gift we simply receive, but one we must give to others, a gift to carry forth. I was struck last week by an image of Pope Francis washing the feet of refugees: different faiths, different countries. And what a powerful reminder of our obligations, if in fact we're not afraid and if in fact we hope and if in fact we believe, that it's something that we have to give.

His Holiness said this Easter Sunday, God "enables us to see with His eyes of love and compassion those who hunger and thirst, strangers and prisoners, the marginalized and the outcast, the victims of oppression and violence."

To do justice, to love kindness, that's what all of you collectively are involved in in your own ways each and every day: feeding the hungry, healing the sick, teaching our children, housing the homeless, welcoming immigrants and refugees. And in that way, you are teaching all of us what it means when it comes to true discipleship. It's not just words. It's not just getting dressed and looking good on Sunday. But it's service, particularly for the least of these.

And whether fighting the scourge of poverty or joining with us to work on criminal justice reform and giving people a second chance in life, you have been on the front lines of delivering God's message of love and compassion and mercy for His children.

And I have to say that over the last 7 years, I could not have been prouder to work with you. We have built partnerships that have transcended partisan affiliation, that have transcended individual congregations and even faiths, to form a community that's bound by our shared ideals and rooted in our common humanity. And that community I believe will endure beyond the end of my Presidency, because it's a living thing that all of you are involved with all around this country and all around the world.

And our faith changes us. I know it's changed me. It renews in us a sense of possibility. It allows us to believe that although we are all sinners and that at times we will falter, there's always the possibility of redemption. Every once in a while, we might get something right, we might do some good; that there's the presence of grace; and that we, in some small way, can be worthy of this magnificent love that God has bestowed on us.

You remind me all of that each and every day. And you have just been incredible friends and partners, and I could not be prouder to know all of you. I thank you for sharing in this fellowship. I pray that our time together will strengthen our souls and fortify our faith and renew our spirit, that we will continue to build a nation and a world that is worthy of His many blessings.

And I want to remind you all that after a good chunk of sleep when I get out of here, I'm going to be right out there with you doing some work. [*Laughter*] So you're not rid of me yet, even after we're done with the Presidency.

But I am going to take 3, 4 months where I just sleep. [*Laughter*] And I hope you all don't mind that.

So with that, I would like to invite Reverend Doctor Derrick Harkins for our opening prayer.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 9:50 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Howard-John Wesley, pastor, Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, VA, and his sons Howard-John Wesley II and Cooper R. Wesley; Shaquille O'Neal, former center, National Basketball Association; and Derrick Harkins, former pastor, Nineteenth Street Baptist Church in Washington, DC.

Remarks During a Lunch With Commutation Recipients and an Exchange With Reporters
March 30, 2016

The President. Well, this has been an extraordinary lunch that I've had a chance to have here with some extraordinary people. As all of you know, it has been one of my top priorities for us to bring about a more sensible, more effective approach to our criminal justice system, particularly when it comes to drug crimes. And part of that has been to try to make sure that we have, on the front end, sensible sentencing, rehabilitation, education, and training in prison to prepare people so that they're not going back to the old mistakes that they made before.

Part of it has been to really reinvigorate our commutations and pardons process, because it is my strong belief that by exercising these Presidential powers, I have the chance to show people what a second chance can look like, that I can highlight the individuals who are getting these second chances and doing extraordinary things with their lives.

And this is just a small sample of individuals who were—whose sentences were commuted, a couple by me, a couple by President Bush, a couple by President Clinton. They're all at different stages of this new chapter in their lives, but the stories are extraordinary. You've got individuals sitting around this table who are now attorneys themselves and raising children and about to get married. You've got folks who are inspirational speakers and working with those who are reentering society after having done their time and helping people make adjustments.

To my left right here, just a good example, Phillip Emmert, who lives in Iowa City. Phillip, who served in our United States Army, was arrested and convicted of distributing methamphetamines, received a 27-year sentence. His wife, while he was in prison, had an accident that paralyzed her, had a small child at home. But Phil had the strength to do everything he could to get trained to learn a whole bunch of systems and ended up specializing in heating and air conditioning systems. He was commuted by President Bush, was able to find a job with the VA; today, is gainfully employed. His boss loves him. [*Laughter*] He's doing great work, is at the same time caring for his wife, who's still disabled. Has been a terrific father, is part of a Bible study group and a leader in the community. And this is an example of what we mean when we talk about second chances. And I could tell you just as compelling stories about everybody sitting at this table.

So I wanted to have lunch with them in part so that I could hear their stories and be able to relay them to the American peoples to make sure that folks are understood not just as a number, but these are individuals with families and children and parents who love them, and have made mistakes, but take responsibility for it.

I also wanted to have this lunch to learn how can we improve the process of making sure this—that people, after they've served their time, can reintegrate in the society effectively. And I've got some very interesting ideas about some of the barriers that we continue to put in place that make it harder for people to readjust

and make it more likely that they get back in trouble. And we want to clear away as many of those barriers as possible.

I will tell you that listening to their stories also reminded me of how out of proportion and counterproductive so much of our sentencing in—when it comes to our drug laws are, both at the Federal level and the State level. And I am very grateful for the bipartisan conversations that have been taking place in Congress.

I am still hopeful that we can get criminal justice reform done. It does not make sense for a nonviolent offender—drug offender to be getting 20 years, 30 years, in some cases life imprisonment. That's not serving anybody. It's not serving taxpayers, it's not serving public safety, and it's damaging families. And I'm very grateful that Speaker Ryan and others have expressed an interest in starting to call these bills and seeing if we can get them moving before this Congress adjourns.

I am going to continue to emphasize the importance of pardons and commutations going forward. Today we commuted 61 additional individuals who are deserving and who I believe will be looking at the people sitting here at this table as models and inspiration for what is possible in their lives, that will mean that, at this point, I will have commuted 268 [248]* sentences, which is more than the previous 6 Presidents combined.

But we're not done, and we're going to keep on working on this until I leave. It's something that I'm going to keep on working on even after I leave the Presidency, because I—some of you know we had a Easter Prayer Breakfast with ministers, pastors from all around the country of all denominations in which we read Scripture and were reminded of Jesus' teachings. And at the heart of my faith, and what I believe is at the heart of the American ideal is, is that we're all imperfect. We all make mistakes. We have to own those mistakes. We have to take responsibility and learn from those mistakes. But we as a society have to make sure that people who do take responsibility and own and learn from those mistakes are able to continue to be part of the American family. It's the right thing to do. It's the smart thing to do.

And I just appreciate the testimony of all the people here at this table, because it gave me a great lift. Made me feel inspired. And I'm really, really proud of them.

All right?

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Thank you.

Employment Opportunities for Former Prisoners

Q. ——what message would you have for employers who——

White House staffer. Thank you, pool—[*inaudible*].

The President. No, no, no I want to take this one. Go ahead.

Q. What message would you have for employers who perhaps would like to give people like the folks you're meeting with today a second chance?

The President. Well, many of the people sitting at this table described with incredible gratitude the employers who did give them that chance. And what I think employers will find is that if they are willing to look past mistakes that often were made when these individuals were 20, 21, 23, and now they are older and more mature, you'll end up getting really hard, really loyal workers.

And I've heard that repeatedly from employers, that if they are willing to take a chance on somebody, they will be rewarded by somebody who is grateful and will go above and beyond the call of duty. But unfortunately, we have a lot of barriers in a lot of companies. This is part of the reason why, at the Federal level, we have instituted a banning of the box. Because so often, that prevents somebody from even meeting a felon, because all they see is there's a record there, and don't have a chance to hear somebody's story and get a measure of the man or the woman and their ability to do the job.

* White House correction.

I am very supportive of us generally eliminating that as a screening function. I think employers are going to have to continue to recognize that there are some particular issues surrounding persons who are ex-offenders that may have to be accommodated. They may have to meet with their probation officer occasionally and so forth.

But uniformly, when I've talked to employers who take a chance—and that includes, by the way, this establishment, which is one of the reasons that we decided to have lunch here, Busboys and Poets. Burger was excellent—[*laughter*]—but what is also true is, is that they've given a number of ex-offenders a chance and do not screen using that box to find out at the front end whether somebody should get an interview or now.

What they'll find is they'll find—they will get somebody who is driven and understands how precious it is just to have a chance to be useful and to do good work. And the kindness that employers show, I think, will be returned manyfold. So I hope that that's a practice among private sector employers and public sector employers that begins to spread. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:32 p.m. at Busboys and Poets restaurant. In his remarks, he referred to Charlotte, NC, resident Ramona Brant; Washington, DC, resident Norman O. Brown; Dublin, CA, resident Angie Jenkins; Atlanta, GA, resident Serena D. Nunn; Richmond, VA, resident Kemba N. Smith; Charles County, MD, resident Michael D. Short; former President George W. Bush; and Dixie Emmert, wife, and Jessie Emmert, daughter, of Iowa City, IA, resident Phillip A. Emmert.

Statement on the Inauguration of Htin Kyaw as President of Burma
March 30, 2016

I congratulate U Htin Kyaw on his Inauguration today as President of Burma and look forward to working with him and the new Government. U Htin Kyaw's Inauguration represents a historic milestone in the country's transition to a democratically elected, civilian-led Government. This extraordinary moment in Burma's history is a testament to its people, institutions, and leaders who have worked together to ensure a peaceful transfer of power, and it speaks to the significance of the reforms the country has undertaken since 2011.

Burma will face significant challenges going forward, including achieving broad-based economic development, advancing national reconciliation, and promoting the rights and freedoms of all its people. The United States looks forward to being a friend and partner of the new Government and the people of Burma as they make progress toward building a more inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous future.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to South Sudan
March 30, 2016

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13664 of April 3, 2014, with respect to South Sudan is to continue in effect beyond April 3, 2016.

The situation in and in relation to South Sudan, which has been marked by activities that threaten the peace, security, or stability of South Sudan and the surrounding region, including widespread violence and atrocities, human rights abuses, recruitment and use of child soldiers, attacks on peacekeepers, and obstruction of humanitarian operations, continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13664 with respect to South Sudan.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Paul D. Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Park Geun-hye of South Korea and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan
March 31, 2016

President Obama. Well, it is a pleasure to host President Park of the Republic of Korea and Prime Minister Abe of Japan, two of our closest allies in Asia, two of my closest friends and collaborators on the international stage. We are bound together by treaty, by trade, and by the enduring bonds between our peoples.

We share common values and a common vision for the future of the Asia-Pacific, a vision that is rooted in our strong commitment to a rules-based order, one in which all countries, regardless of size, act according to shared norms and shared principles.

Because of the topic of this summit, the Nuclear Security Summit, it's not surprising that one of the topics most on our minds is the issue of North Korea. And we are united in our efforts to deter and defend against North Korean provocations. We recognize that our security is linked, that we have to work together to meet this challenge. And we also recognize that it is important to the entire international community to vigilantly enforce the strong U.N. security measures that were passed in light of some of the ballistic missile and nuclear activity that Pyongyang has been engaging in.

We agreed during this meeting that trilateral security cooperation is essential to maintaining peace and stability in Northeast Asia, deterring the North Korean nuclear threat and the potential of nuclear proliferation as a consequence of North Korean activities. And in our meeting, we discussed ways to deepen that cooperation. We've directed our teams to work diligently in the coming weeks and months to elaborate additional steps that we can take collectively in order to ensure that we have a denuclearized Korean Peninsula and that we can restore a sense of stability and peace to the region, as well as, hopefully, promoting the kind of opportunities and prosperity for the North Korean people who have been suffering so severely because of human rights abuses in North Korea.

We also had a broader discussion about global challenges. We shared our commitment to moving forward on the Paris Agreement around climate change. We are committed to working together on combating ISIL. And at the end of this Nuclear Security Summit, there's going to be an international focus on how—what additional steps need to be taken in light of the terrible tragedy that took place in Brussels. Both the Republic of Korea and Japan have been stalwart allies in that process.

And finally, we talked about some potential areas of collaboration between our three countries on more positive agenda items, such as the Vice President's moonshot to cure cancer. There's already collaboration between Japan and the Republic of Korea on cancer research. We're going to be directing our teams to work

together in a trilateral fashion to make further strides in this critical area.

So I want to thank both President Park and Prime Minister Abe for their outstanding work with us, their significant progress in their bilateral relationship, and our shared commitment to promoting a more peaceful world.

With that, let me turn it over to President Park of Republic of Korea.

President Park. Today's trilateral summit meeting with President Obama and Prime Minister, following as it does our previous meeting at The Hague in 2014, is indeed a special occasion. In light of the security situation on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia in the wake of North Korea's fourth nuclear test, just the mere fact that we three leaders have gathered in one spot in and of itself carries huge significance.

First of all, on the North Korean nuclear issue, which represents a shared challenge confronting all three countries—an urgent challenge—today's meeting has led to in-depth discussions on what our three countries should do together in order to stop North Korea from upgrading its nuclear capabilities and alter its misguided calculus. And we further reinforced our coordination towards North Korea.

Given the adoption of Security Council Resolution 2270, which is the strongest sanctions resolution on North Korea to date, what is essential going forward is to thoroughly enforce the resolution so that North Korea realizes it cannot ensure its own survivability unless it abandons its nuclear aspirations. To this end, Korea, the U.S., and Japan have agreed to coordinate closely not only in enforcing the Security Council resolution, but in implementing our respective individual sanctions on North Korea, all the while further enhancing our solidarity with the international community to make sure that the international community effectively steps up its pressure on North Korea.

In addition, in relation to the recent escalation of North Korea's rhetoric about making further provocations, I stand here together with the leaders of the United States and Japan and warn once again that the international community will by no means condone North Korea's provocation and that should it choose to undertake yet another provocation, it is certain to find itself facing even tougher sanctions and isolation.

Meanwhile, given how the North Korean human rights issue pertains to the universal values of humanity and is integral to whether all people on the Korean Peninsula can enjoy decent lives as human beings, we also agreed to bolster our efforts to improve human rights in North Korea. In this connection, the fact that the U.N. Human Rights Council recently adopted a stronger North Korean human rights resolution by consensus and without a vote aptly illustrates the profound extent to which the international community is concerned about the state of human rights in North Korea.

I attach great importance to trilateral cooperation among Korea, the U.S., and Japan. And in this vein, my hope is to see today's meeting spur progress and trilateral cooperation where possible, which in turn can provide a basis that contributes to strengthening communication with other countries in the region to enhance cooperation with them.

In addition, I hope that our trilateral cooperation can set the pace for working together with a wide range of countries in the region and thereby continue to serve the cause of peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific.

Aside from the North Korean nuclear issue, we also agreed at today's meeting to redouble our cooperation on global issues, including climate change, counterterrorism, and health. In particular, having hosted the second Nuclear Security Summit after the United States hosted the first, Korea intends to make leading contributions to moving the nuclear security regime further forward as we enter the post-summit phase.

President Obama just spoke about the cancer moonshot initiative. And we couldn't agree more about the importance of curing cancer and what it can do to promote public health and welfare. And we welcome this pathbreaking initiative by the United States. We look forward to expanding trilateral cooperation in this area as we go forward.

I hope that today's summit meeting will lay the groundwork for enhanced coordination among countries in the region in the service of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. And I take this opportunity to thank President Obama once again for hosting this successful trilateral summit.

Thank you.

Prime Minister Abe. First of all, my deepest appreciations to President Obama for hosting today's Japan-U.S.-Korea summit. I also was very delighted to be able to see Park—President Park Geun-hye once again.

Leaders of three countries that are responsible for regional peace and stability have gotten together at one venue and confirmed the importance of the rule of law and actions based on rules and exchanged candid views on a variety of regional and global issues, including North Korea. The meeting was timely and extremely meaningful.

In light of the regional situation faced by the three nations, it is necessary to further promote Japan-U.S.-Korea cooperation in the area of security. A special concern is the progress of North Korea's nuclear and missile capability, which is a direct and grave threat not only to the three countries, but to the global community.

In order to jointly respond to such circumstances, we confirmed our commitment to strengthen the trilateral cooperation at all levels, which was a major achievement of this meeting. We agreed to give directions to the working level to promote concrete security and defense cooperation between the foreign affairs and defense authorities of the three nations.

Further, in order for the global community to steadfastly implement the Security Council resolutions, we hope to proceed with assistance to the peripheral countries and developing countries in capacity building for nonproliferation.

On the issue of abduction, I spoke of the importance of the abduction issue and that it is a problem that needs to be resolved with certainty. And I'm most appreciative of the kind understanding and support shown by both Presidents.

In addition, terrorism, Middle East, climate change, cancer—elimination of cancer, how we can cooperate, we have touched upon several other items as well. Throughout these consultations, we confirmed that there will be further collaboration and cooperation between our three nations on global challenges. Based on what we discussed this morning, Japan, the United States, and Korea, who share regional strategic interests, will continue to closely collaborate and cooperate with each other.

Three leaders getting together at one venue and conducting frank exchange of views contributes to the peace and prosperity of the region and of the global community. Once again, I was reminded of that fact. And once again, may I extend my deepest gratitude to President Obama for hosting this meeting.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:51 a.m. in room 151AB at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. President Park and Prime Minister Abe spoke in Korean and Japanese, respectively, and their remarks were translated by interpreters.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Xi Jinping of China
March 31, 2016

President Obama. I want to welcome President Xi back to Washington. As I've said before, the United States welcomes the rise of a peaceful, stable, and prosperous China, working with us to address global challenges. And I have been committed throughout my administration to working effectively with China on a whole range of issues and have developed a frank and effective level of communications cooperation with President Xi as we seek to ex-

pand cooperation between our countries and narrow our differences.

The United States and China have established a relationship when it comes to nuclear security, and that includes China's new Nuclear Security Center of Excellence. I believe we can deepen our cooperation, including against nuclear smuggling.

Of great importance to both of us is North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons, which threatens the security and stability of the region. And President Xi and I are both committed to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and full implementation of U.N. sanctions. So we're going to discuss how we can discourage action like nuclear missile tests that escalate tensions and violate international obligations.

I'm also very pleased that today we're announcing new steps to accelerate implementation of the historic Paris climate change agreement. Our cooperation and our joint statements were critical in arriving at the Paris Agreement, and our two countries have agreed that we will not only sign the agreement on the first day possible, but we're committing to formally join it as soon as possible this year. And we urge other countries to do the same.

I look forward to working with President Xi as well on the global economy. As the world's two largest economies, we have a special obligation to find cooperative measures that we can take to expand growth and global demand. And because China is hosting the G–20 this year, we look forward to using this meeting to establish some of the agenda items that we want to drive at the G–20. We very much want the G–20 to be a successful meeting, and given China's past hospitality of large summit meetings, we're sure we can be successful in helping to promote global growth as well as address a range of other challenges.

Now, as has been true in the past, we will have a candid exchange about areas where we have significant differences, issues like human rights, cyber and maritime issues. Like China and other countries, the United States has significant interests in the Asia-Pacific region. We have deep concerns about our ability to protect the intellectual property of our companies. And we care deeply about human rights. But I very much appreciate President Xi's willingness to have candid conversations on these issues in a constructive way. And this will just be one more step in our overall efforts to assure that the United States and China maintain the kind of effective, constructive relationship that is important not only to our two peoples, but also to the world at large.

So, President Xi, welcome. Let me allow you to address the press briefly.

President Xi. Mr. President, it's my great pleasure to accept your invitation and attend the fourth Nuclear Security Summit and to have this bilateral meeting with you on the margins of the summit. I appreciate the opportunity to have this bilateral meeting.

Through the joint efforts of both sides, many major steps of progress have been taken in our bilateral relationship. We have worked alongside others to make the Paris climate conference a success and adopted the historic Paris Agreement. We have worked closely together on the Iranian nuclear issue and concluded and implemented the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Our two-way trade, two-way investment, and two-way travel have set new highs, and we have had effective communication and coordination on the Korean nuclear issue, Syria, Afghanistan, and peacekeeping development, health, and other important issues.

All of this demonstrates the enormous potential in building the new model of major country relations and highlights the importance and necessity of enhanced level of coordination and cooperation between China and the U.S.

The world economic growth is sluggish, and regional issues are complex and protracted. The terrorist threat is on the rise. As the largest developing country and the largest developed country, the world's top two economies, China and the United States have growing responsibilities for promoting world peace, stability, and prosperity. There are wide areas where we should and can work with each other.

In the meantime, as you have said, Mr. President, our two countries have some disputes and disagreements in some areas. On the basis of respecting each other core interests and major concerns, we should seek active solutions through dialogue and consultation. When this is not possible, for the time being, we should manage them constructively and avoid misunderstanding and misperception or escalation and prevent big disruptions to the overall interests of China-U.S. cooperation.

I'm glad that this time the two sides have issued the third joint statement on climate change, and we have announced that we will both sign the Paris Agreement on April the 22d.

After this bilateral meeting, the two sides will issue a joint statement on nuclear security cooperation and work together to make the NSS a success.

We will also actively explore possibilities of deepening cooperation in wide areas, from economy and trade, to mil-to-mil ties and people-to-people exchange, from counterterrorism to law enforcement and cybersecurity. And we want to enhance communication and coordination on the Korean nuclear issue and other regional and global issues and to consolidate and expand our shared interests.

I wish to reiterate that it is a priority for China's foreign policy to work with the United States to build a new model of major country relations and to realize no conflicts or confrontation, mutual respect, and win-win cooperation.

I look forward to increasing communication with President Obama, focus on cooperation, manage our differences, build mutual trust, and set China-U.S. relations on a path of healthy and steady growth.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:24 p.m. in Room 152A of the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. President Xi spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Xi Jinping of China on Climate Change

March 31, 2016

Washington D.C.

1. Over the past three years, climate change has become a pillar of the U.S.-China bilateral relationship. Both countries have taken strong measures at home to build green, low-carbon and climate-resilient economies, helping galvanize global action to combat climate change and culminating in the Paris Agreement reached last December. With their joint announcement of ambitious climate actions in November 2014, President Barack Obama and President Xi Jinping sought to lead by example, and by the time the Paris conference opened a year later, some 186 countries had put forward their own climate actions. In September 2015, the two leaders laid out a common vision for the Paris outcome during President Xi's State Visit to Washington and also announced major domestic policy measures and cooperative initiatives to combat climate change, as well as significant progress on climate finance. In Paris, the United States and China, working together and with others, played a critical role in crafting a historic, ambitious global climate change agreement.

2. Today, the two Presidents announce another significant step in their joint climate efforts. The United States and China will sign the Paris Agreement on April 22nd and take their respective domestic steps in order to join the Agreement as early as possible this year. They encourage other Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to do the same, with a view to bringing the Paris Agreement into force as early as pos-

sible. The Presidents further express their commitment to work together and with others to promote the full implementation of the Paris Agreement to win the fight against the climate threat.

3. The Presidents recognize that the Paris Agreement marks a global commitment to tackling climate change and a strong signal of the need for a swift transition to low-carbon, climate-resilient economies. In this regard, the Presidents are also committed to working bilaterally and with other countries to achieve successful outcomes this year in related multilateral fora, including on an HFC amendment under the Montreal Protocol pursuant to the Dubai Pathway and on a global market-based measure for addressing greenhouse gas emissions from international aviation at the International Civil Aviation Organization Assembly. To accelerate clean energy innovation and deployment, they will work together to implement the goals of the Mission Innovation initiative announced at the Paris conference and carry forward the work of the Clean Energy Ministerial. They support a successful G–20 Summit in Hangzhou this year, including strong climate and clean energy outcomes, and call on the G–20 countries to engage constructively in international cooperation on energy and climate change. And they will continue to deepen and broaden bilateral cooperation through the U.S.-China Climate Change Working Group, the U.S.-China Clean Energy Research Center, and other efforts.

4. Finally, the Presidents commit to taking concrete steps to implement the commitments they made in their September 2015 Joint Statement to use public resources to finance and encourage the transition toward low carbon technologies as a priority. Since the Joint Statement, the United States led an effort in the OECD to successfully adopt the first-ever set of multilateral standards for support of coal-fired power plants using export credit, and China has been strengthening its green and low-carbon policies and regulations with a view to strictly controlling public investment flowing into projects with high pollution and carbon emissions both domestically and internationally.

5. The joint efforts by China and the United States on climate change will serve as an enduring legacy of the partnership between our two countries.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Xi Jinping of China on Nuclear Security Cooperation

March 31, 2016

1. Today in Washington, D.C., on the occasion of the fourth Nuclear Security Summit (NSS), we, the United States and China, declare our commitment to working together to foster a peaceful and stable international environment by reducing the threat of nuclear terrorism and striving for a more inclusive, coordinated, sustainable and robust global nuclear security architecture for the common benefit and security of all.

2. The United States and China, in this regard, are announcing the successful completion of the inaugural round of bilateral discussions on nuclear security that took place on February 20, 2016, in Stockholm, Sweden. We plan to continue this dialogue on an annual basis, so as to intensify our cooperation to prevent nuclear terrorism and continue advancing Nuclear Security Summit goals.

3. We further demonstrate today our conviction that strong communication and cooperation are essential to nuclear security by committing to continue strong support for the work of relevant international agencies on nuclear security, in accordance with their respective mandates, through engagement of our experts as well as financial and in-kind contributions.

4. Together we continue to collaborate on key areas of nuclear security. In particular, we recognize significant accomplishments and ongoing engagement in the following areas:

5. On conversion of Miniature Neutron Source Reactors (MNSR) from highly enriched uranium (HEU) fuel to low-enriched uranium (LEU) fuel, the United States and China express satisfaction on the recent LEU start-up of the prototype MNSR reactor near Beijing, China. Building on this successful collaboration, China commits to work with the United States to convert its remaining MNSR reactors at Shenzhen University. Further, the United States and China together commit to work through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to support the conversion of MNSR reactors in Ghana and Nigeria as soon as possible. China reaffirms its readiness, upon the request of respective countries, to convert all remaining Chinese-origin MNSRs worldwide.

6. On nuclear security training and best practices, the United States and China express satisfaction on the successful completion and official opening of the nuclear security Center of Excellence (COE) in Beijing, China on 18 March, 2016. The COE is a world-class venue to meet China's domestic nuclear security training requirements, as well as a forum for bilateral and regional best practice exchanges, and a venue for demonstrating advanced technologies related to nuclear security. The United States and China commit to continued engagement on nuclear security training and best practices to maximize the use and effectiveness of the COE. China further commits to sponsor training programs at the COE for regional partners and other international participants to further global nuclear security awareness and engagement.

7. On counter nuclear smuggling, the United States and China state our enduring commitment to prevent terrorists, criminals, or other unauthorized actors from acquiring nuclear or other radioactive materials. Recognizing the need for strengthened international cooperation to counter nuclear smuggling, we will continue to seek opportunities to deepen our joint efforts to investigate nuclear and radioactive material smuggling networks; detect, recover and secure material out of regulatory control; and successfully arrest and prosecute the criminals involved. The United States and China will continue to coordinate efforts to strengthen counter nuclear smuggling capabilities and share best practices with the international community, taking full advantage of the training programs sponsored by the China Customs Training Center for Radiation Detection. We further commit to continuing a discussion in 2016 on counter nuclear smuggling where our two countries can exchange views on the nuclear smuggling threat, effective tools to counter this threat, and how our governments could strengthen collaboration in this area.

8. On the security of radioactive sources, the United States and China express satisfaction on the fruitful cooperation between the two sides in enhancing the security of radioactive sources, in particular regarding recovery of disused sources and transport security of radioactive sources. We commit to further strengthen cooperation in this regard, and facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices with other countries.

9. The United States and China also express satisfaction on the recent signature of the Statement of Intent on Commodity Identification Training Cooperation between the General Administration of Customs of China and the Department of Energy of the United States.

10. The United States and China express their strong commitment to addressing the evolving nuclear security challenge through continuing activities sustained efforts after the current Nuclear Security Summit process concludes.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President François Hollande of France
March 31, 2016

President Obama. Well, I want to welcome my dear friend and partner in so many issues, President Hollande of France, and his delegation.

This is obviously an occasion in which we are deeply concerned about nuclear security, making sure that nuclear materials don't fall into the hands of terrorists, but in the wake of the Brussels attack, with our memories of the tragedy in Paris, we have not only great urgency around the nuclear issue, but eliminating generally the scourge of terrorism.

And we are continuing to deepen the partnership with France around counterterrorism efforts. We've made some significant strides around information sharing. President Hollande has been a leader in helping to galvanize the European community around the necessity to be more effective in transatlantic exchanges of information and rooting out foreign fighters, identifying potential attacks, cutting off financing. And so this has been a very useful exchange in terms of examining the progress that had been made by our teams and where we still have to push a little bit harder.

We're both absolutely committed to the destruction of ISIL, and France has been a key coalition partner in our efforts in Iraq and Syria. So we had an overview of the progress that's been made on the campaign and some of the strategic decisions that have to be made in the coming months to make sure that we build on the progress that we've seen in reducing ISIL's territory and putting them back on their heels.

And we also had an opportunity to discuss the possibilities of a new government being formed in Libya and how we can try to solidify a structure there that would prevent ISIL from using that territory as a future stronghold, as well as deal with the broader issues of refugees, both because of the enormous humanitarian concerns that these refugees present as they try to make their way to Europe, but also the consequences of how the refugee problem is putting enormous strains on European unity and the strategic concerns that we have there. Those are concerns not just for Europe, but also for the United States.

As always, France has been a great partner with us on a whole range of other global issues. And I want to, in particular, commend once again President Hollande's critical leadership in forging the Paris Agreement. We agreed that we need to work as diligently as possible to make sure that we bring the Agreement into force and that we implement it effectively. We have no time to lose.

So, Mr. President, it is wonderful to see you again. And I thank the outstanding efforts of your entire team in making progress on all these critical fronts.

President Hollande. Well, first of all, please allow me to thank President Barack Obama for organizing this summit on nuclear security. This was his willingness, as early as 2010, to get all countries to understand that there were some risks. And among these risks, there is terrorism. So the first purpose of that meeting is to talk about the global terror threat. It is a threat for all countries.

Europe has been hit more, given that it is also the target of the terrorists and ISIS. We've seen it in Paris last year, as well as in Brussels. And together with President Obama, we worked on coordinating further our commitments, our organizations, our services when it comes to fighting against these terrorists. We are also making sure that between Europe and the United States there can be a very high level coordination.

But we're also well aware that the roots of terrorism, Islamist terrorism, is in Syria and in Iraq. We therefore have to act both in Syria and in Iraq, and this is what we're doing within the framework of the coalition. And we note that Daesh is losing ground thanks to the strikes we've been able to launch with the coalition. We are continuing to support Iraq. This is also a decision we have taken, supporting the Iraqi Government and making sure that they can claim back their entire territory, including Mosul.

In Syria, we are acting both in terms of military support, as well as politically. Here again, we are convinced that Daesh is losing ground and losing the battle. And in this respect, Raqqa is a target, and we shall support all the forces, and I have in mind, in particular, the Arab forces as well as the Kurd forces, which are acting to that end.

There's also, politically, the need to make sure that the truce, which has been obtained—the truce which is being complied with so far—is also at the service of a political transition and a negotiation that shall involve all the stakeholders, and we will have an opportunity to talk to a number of governments or heads of state of this region. But it is clear that this transition should not lead to reproducing the very same cause of the crisis of the war in Syria. And here again, this is our goal: the goal of another government, another regime for the future of Syria.

Lastly, we talked about Libya. We fully acknowledge the Libyan Government because it is that Government—the Sarraj government—under his leadership that will gather the international support and will bring about stability and that will prevent the migration flows that can both be a tragedy for the individuals, can also feed trafficking. And it is also about preventing Europe from having to deal with tens and thousands of people, even though Europe has a duty to make sure that the refugees can claim asylum. So we have to do everything so that stability can be now a priority for Libya.

We also discussed a number of other topics, including the agreement with Iran, given that both Barack Obama and myself and all the others who were involved in the negotiations, we've been playing our role, and now we have to make sure that the commitments are met. So it was important that we could get together. And once again, I would like to commend—I mean, pay tribute to the friendship between our two countries as well as Barack Obama's ability to stand by us in the fight against terrorism.

Thank you, Barack.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:10 p.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known as ISIS or Daesh. President Hollande referred to Prime Minister Fayez Mustafa al-Sarraj of Libya. President Hollande spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan Announcing Cooperation in the Sphere of Nonproliferation and Nuclear Security

March 31, 2016

The United States and the Republic of Kazakhstan have confirmed a shared commitment to implementing practical measures to strengthen the nuclear nonproliferation regime and enhance nuclear security.

The United States welcomes the Republic of Kazakhstan's activities to strengthen nuclear security and implement decisions of the Washington, Seoul, and Hague Nuclear Security Summits.

In this regard, the parties note with satisfaction that Kazakhstan has recently completed the conversion of the VVR–K research reactor at the Institute of Nuclear Physics (INP) to low enriched uranium (LEU) fuel, following the previous conversion of the VVR–K critical assembly.

Moreover, the parties have announced the successful elimination of all fresh highly enriched uranium (HEU) from the VVR–K research reactor in Kazakhstan by down-blending this material at Kazakhstan's nuclear fuel factory and emphasize the commitments of Kazakhstan to return the HEU spent fuel to the Russian Federation as soon as possible, thereby eliminating all HEU from the INP facility.

The parties welcome Kazakhstan's continued commitment to the conversion of the IVG.1M and IGR research reactors to LEU fuel when an acceptable LEU fuel becomes available and to return the HEU spent fuel from these reactors to Russia once their conversion is completed.

The parties support the efforts made by industry to implement new technologies without using sensitive nuclear materials, where technically possible and economically acceptable.

Furthermore, the parties are pleased with the joint efforts made to establish the Nuclear Security Training Center (NSTC). The Center will offer training in the areas of nuclear nonproliferation; material protection, control, and accounting; and countering the illicit trafficking of nuclear and other radioactive materials. Construction on the NSTC began in late 2015 and the center will be operational by the end of calendar year 2016.

The United States and Kazakhstan and further commit to working together on guard force training, inventory management systems, site and transportation security, cyber security, and cooperation to enhance the global nuclear detection architecture.

The United States and Republic of Kazakhstan attach importance to the Nuclear Security Summit process, underlining the importance of continued efforts aimed at strengthening nuclear security as well as ongoing collaboration between the parties on issues related to strengthening the nuclear nonproliferation regime.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks During a Meeting With P5-Plus-1 Leaders
April 1, 2016

Good morning. It is a pleasure to be here with our P5-plus-1 partners, the European Union, and Director General Amano of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Because of the nations that are represented here today, we achieved a historic deal to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. And today is an opportunity to review progress as that deal continues to be implemented.

Our work together is a key part of the comprehensive agenda that I outlined in Prague 7 years ago: stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and seeking the long-term vision of a world without them. That included strengthening the global regime that prevents the spread of nuclear weapons. And one of the greatest tests of that regime was Iran's nuclear program. After nearly 2 years of intensive negotiations, backed by strong sanctions, the countries represented in this room achieved what decades of animosity and rhetoric did not: a long-term deal that closes off every possible path to building a nuclear weapon and subjects Iran to the most comprehensive nuclear inspections ever negotiated.

And thanks to this deal, we have seen real progress. Already, Iran has dismantled two-thirds of its installed centrifuges. Iran has shipped 98 percent of its enriched uranium stockpile out of Iran. Iran has removed the Arak reactor core and filled it with concrete. If Iran were to cheat, the breakout time to build a nuclear weapon has gone from 2 to 3 months to about a year.

In January, the IAEA verified that Iran had fulfilled key commitments of the deal. And today, Director General Amano will update us on implementation. Our nations have lifted nuclear-related sanctions and it will take time for Iran to reintegrate into the global economy, but Iran is already beginning to see the benefits of this deal.

Now, I think it's important to note that this deal does not resolve all of our differences with Iran, including destabilizing activities in the region. Except for limited exceptions, the U.S. trade embargo on Iran remains in place. And we also continue to vigorously enforce sanctions pertaining to Iran's support for terrorism, human rights abuses, and ballistic missile programs. That's U.S. policy. But what this group—that

doesn't agree on all aspects of policy—does agree on is that this deal has achieved a substantial success and focused on the dangers of nuclear proliferation in an effective way.

The road to this deal was not easy. It took commitment, diplomacy, hard work. It took the leaders and countries gathered around this table coming together and working out our own differences in approach. Full and continued implementation is going to take the same kind of cooperation and consultation. But I am extremely grateful to our partners in this effort.

Even as we continue to face nuclear threats around the world, which is the topic of this summit, this deal does remind us that when the international community stands as one, we can advance our common security.

So I want to thank all the leaders who are gathered here, the countries who are participating, Director General Amano. This is a success of diplomacy that, hopefully, we'll be able to copy in the future.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:08 a.m. in Room 151AB of the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Yukiya Amano, Director General, International Atomic Energy Agency. Also participating in the meeting were President François Hollande of France; Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom; U.S. Secretary of State John F. Kerry; President of the European Council Donald Tusk; Minister of Defense Ursula von der Leyen of Germany; European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini; Russia's Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Ivanovich Kislyak; and President Xi Jinping of China.

Remarks With Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Netherlands at the Opening Plenary Session of the Nuclear Security Summit
April 1, 2016

President Obama. Good morning, everybody. It is my privilege to welcome you to Washington and to formally convene our fourth Nuclear Security Summit. I convened our first summit 6 years ago in this same room because the danger of a terrorist group obtaining and using a nuclear weapon is one of the greatest threats to global security.

Our nations committed ourselves to action: concrete, tangible steps to secure the world's vulnerable nuclear materials. And we continued our work at our summits in Seoul and The Hague. And I want to again thank our friends from the Republic of Korea and the Netherlands for their leadership on this critical issue.

Back at our first summit, I quoted Albert Einstein. At the dawn of the nuclear age, he said, "The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything." And he added, "A new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive." Over the past 6 years, when it comes to nuclear security, we've embraced a new type of thinking and a new type of action. This is a perfect example of a 21st-century security challenge that no one nation can solve alone. It requires coalitions and sustained coordination across borders and institutions. And the good news is, we've made significant progress.

We've made nuclear security a priority at the highest levels. And I want to thank all my fellow leaders, from more than 50 nations and key international organizations, for your commitment to this work and being here today. Some of you were here for our very first summit; many of you have taken office and joined this work. But it's a reminder that the task of protecting our citizens transcends political ideologies, parties, and administrations.

To date, our nations have made some 260 specific commitments to improve nuclear security, and so far, three-quarters of these steps have been implemented. More than a dozen nations have removed all their highly enriched uranium and plutonium. Countries have removed or dispersed—disposed of several tons of this deadly material. Nations have improved

their nuclear security, including stronger regulations and more physical security of nuclear facilities, and more nations are cooperating to prevent nuclear smuggling.

Leading up to this summit, nations have fulfilled additional commitments. Argentina, Switzerland, Uzbekistan all successfully eliminated all their highly enriched uranium from their countries. China recently opened its new center for promoting nuclear security and training, and I'm pleased that the United States and China are cooperating on nuclear security. And Japan is working to complete the removal of more than half a ton of highly enriched uranium and plutonium, which is the largest project in history to remove nuclear material from a country.

I'm also pleased to announce that in recent days, after many years of work, 102 nations have now ratified a key treaty, the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. As a result, we expect that the treaty will enter into force in the coming weeks, giving us more tools that we need to work together in the event of theft of nuclear material or an attack on a nuclear facility. Several of the nations here made the extra effort in recent weeks to complete this process in time for this summit, and I want to thank you very much for helping us get over the line.

Once again, I'm making it clear that the United States will continue to do our part. Today we're releasing a detailed description of the security measures our military takes to protect nuclear material so that other nations can improve their security and transparency as well.

For the first time in a decade, we're providing a public inventory of our stockpiles of highly enriched uranium, which could be used for nuclear weapons, and that inventory is one that we have reduced considerably. When it comes to our nuclear-powered ships and submarines, we're exploring ways to further reduce our holdings of highly enriched uranium.

In short, everybody has been participating, and by working together, our nations have made it harder for terrorists to get their hands on nuclear material. We have measurably reduced the risk. But as we discussed at last night's dinner, the threat of nuclear terrorism persists and continues to evolve. Fortunately, because of our coordinated efforts, no terrorist group has succeeded thus far in obtaining a nuclear weapon or a dirty bomb made of radioactive materials. But we know that Al Qaida has long sought nuclear materials. Individuals involved in the attacks in Paris and Brussels videotaped a senior manager who works at a Belgian nuclear facility. ISIL has already used chemical weapons, including mustard gas, in Syria and Iraq. There is no doubt that if these madmen ever got their hands on a nuclear bomb or nuclear material, they most certainly would use it to kill as many innocent people as possible.

And that's why our work here remains so critical. The single most effective defense against nuclear terrorism is fully securing this material so it doesn't fall into the wrong hands in the first place. This is difficult. At hundreds of military and civilian facilities around the world, there's still roughly 2,000 tons of nuclear materials, and not all of this is properly secured. And just the smallest amount of plutonium—about the size of an apple—could kill and injure hundreds of thousands of innocent people. It would be a humanitarian, political, economic, and environmental catastrophe with global ramifications for decades. It would change our world.

So we cannot be complacent. We have to build on our progress. We have to commit to better security at nuclear facilities, to removing or disposing of more dangerous material, to bringing more nations into treaties and partnerships that prevent proliferation and smuggling, and to make sure that we have the architecture in place to sustain our momentum in the years ahead.

And with so many members of the global coalition against ISIL here today, this will also be an opportunity to make sure that we're doing everything in our power to keep a terrorist group from ISIL—like ISIL from ever getting its hands not just on a nuclear weapon, but any weapon of mass destruction.

So I am very appreciative of the excellent work that's been done and the excellent conversation we had last night. With that, what I'd like to do is to invite Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Netherlands to review some of the specific progress that we've made since our last summit.

Mark.

Prime Minister Rutte. Mr. President, dear Barack, esteemed colleagues, and ladies and gentlemen: Barack, your initiative in 2010 to convene the first Nuclear Summit has bolstered our defenses against the nightmare of a nuclear attack.

The vicious terrorist acts in Brussels last week only underscore the importance of the NSS process. And it's fitting that we are completing this cycle of four summits under your leadership.

In 2014, it was my privilege to welcome the NSS to The Hague. And it's encouraging that we have continued to make progress since then. First, the amount of nuclear material in circulation continues to decline. More and more excess nuclear material is being stored and handled in a sustainable manner, like the recent shipment of excess plutonium and highly enriched uranium from Japan to the United States. And the use of low-enriched uranium for the production of medical isotopes and other purposes is on the rise.

Second, the material that is out there is being made more secure as more countries turn the IAEA recommendations into national legislation. Since The Hague summit, 37 have committed to doing so, most recently, Jordan and China.

And indeed, third, international cooperation and commitment continue to grow. And the imminent entry into force of the amended Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material is a great achievement. And this important milestone reinforces our efforts at this summit today.

I'm also delighted that earlier summits have provided a legacy in two other respects. Firstly, the scenario-based policy discussion we introduce in The Hague was valuable experience. Today we are using this tool again. And I look forward to an informal, concrete, interactive discussion, and I have no doubt it will be just as successful as in The Hague.

Secondly, there is the gift basket. It's great to see how initiatives launched by one or more countries can bring us closer to a breakthrough. In the past few months alone, new gift baskets have been added on complex issues like cybersecurity and insider threats. Let's keep up the momentum even after this final NSS.

Dear colleagues, this summit is not the end of our quest to make the world safe from nuclear terrorism. The five organizations to which we pass the torch today can count on our continued support and commitment. Should a need arise, I know that everybody here will be ready to return to our roundtable.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you very much, Mark, for the excellent summary.

With that, I'd like to ask the press to depart the room. And we will begin this opening plenary session.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:17 a.m. in Halls D and E of the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks at the Closing Session of the Nuclear Security Summit
April 1, 2016

Good afternoon, everybody. If we could get started. If everybody could take their seats, please.

Just to summarize where we've been, in the morning session, we discussed the extensive and impressive national action steps that many of us have taken and the collective efforts that we've made to reduce the amount of nuclear material that might be accessible to terrorists around the world.

During lunch, we focused on international institutions. And I was heartened by our collective commitment to ensure that the IAEA, Interpol, the United Nations, and the various coalitions that have formed are properly resourced and supported by various nation-states in order for them to be able to carry out the ongoing work that will be required to ensure that the commitments and pledges and practices that we have put into place during the course of these Nuclear Security Summits carry forward.

This afternoon's session turns the focus on the terrorist networks themselves. It tells us the possible consequences of terrorists obtaining and using a weapon of mass destruction. Fortunately, as I've said this morning, no terrorist group has yet succeeded in getting their hands on a nuclear device. Our work here will help ensure that we're doing everything possible to prevent that.

This is also an opportunity for our nations to remain united and focused on the most active terrorist network at the moment, and that is ISIL. A majority of the nations here are part of the global coalition against ISIL. A number of our countries have been targeted by ISIL attacks. Just about all of our nations have seen citizens join ISIL in Syria and Iraq. So this is a threat to us all.

In Syria and Iraq, ISIL continues to lose ground. That's the good news. Our coalition continues to take out its leaders, including those planning external terrorist attacks. They are losing their oil infrastructure. They are losing their revenues. Morale is suffering. We believe that the flow of foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq has slowed, even as the threat from foreign fighters returning to commit acts of horrific violence remains all too real.

In fact, as ISIL is squeezed in Syria and Iraq, we can anticipate it lashing out elsewhere, as we've seen most recently and tragically in countries from Turkey to Brussels. This means that the sense of urgency that we've shown in destroying ISIL in Iraq and Syria also has to infuse our efforts to prevent attacks around the world.

We need to do even more to prevent the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. After the Paris attacks, the United States deployed surge teams to Europe to bolster these efforts, and we'll be deploying additional teams in the near future. We all have a role to play. We're all going to have to do more when it comes to intelligence sharing. We simply cannot afford to have critical intelligence not being shared as needed, whether between governments or within governments. And today is an opportunity to explore ways to step up those efforts.

Looking around this room, I see nations that represent the overwhelming majority of humanity, from different regions, races, religions, cultures. But our people do share common aspirations to live in security and peace and to be free from fear. The fight against ISIL will continue to be difficult, but together, we are making real progress, and I'm absolutely confident that we will prevail and destroy this vile organization. As compared to ISIL's vision of death and destruction, I believe our nations together offer a hopeful vision focused on what we can build for our people.

With that, what I'd like to do is ask the press to depart. We will then be showing a video that focuses attention on possible scenarios that might emerge with respect to terrorist networks. It will give us a good opportunity to test those areas where we still have work to do and how we can strengthen our collective efforts against these networks.

So if I could ask the press to depart promptly, please.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:55 p.m. in Halls D and E of the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Joint Statement by President Obama and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan on Nuclear Security Cooperation
April 1, 2016

Recalling President Obama and Prime Minister Abe's pledge at the 2014 Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague, Netherlands:

Today in Washington, D.C., on the occasion of the fourth Nuclear Security Summit (NSS), Prime Minister Abe and President Obama announced that Japan and the United States have completed the removal of all highly-enriched uranium (HEU) and separated plutonium fuels from the Fast Critical Assembly (FCA) in Japan. This project was accomplished on an accelerated timeline well ahead of schedule, thanks to the hard work and strong cooperation from both sides. This effort represents the realization of a commitment first announced at the 2014 Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague and reiterated during Prime Minister Abe's April 2015 visit to Washington, D.C. It furthers our mutual goal of minimizing stocks of HEU and separated plutonium worldwide, which will help prevent unauthorized actors, criminals, or terrorists from acquiring such materials. The United States will downblend the HEU to low enriched uranium (LEU) for use in civilian activities and convert the plutonium into a less sensitive form for final disposition.

Today our two countries further demonstrate our determination to make contributions to the efforts to minimize stocks of HEU worldwide by announcing our pledge to work together to remove all HEU fuels from the Kyoto University Critical Assembly (KUCA) to the United States for downblend and permanent threat reduction. This removal will be made possible by the conversion of KUCA from HEU to LEU fuels, when technically and economically feasible. KUCA will continue to serve its important missions in relevant research and human resource development, with fuels that will no longer present a risk of theft and use by nuclear terrorists.

The removal of HEU and plutonium fuels from the FCA and our pledge to convert KUCA are part of the ongoing activities of the U.S.-Japan Nuclear Security Working Group (NSWG). Under the NSWG, we have taken a layered approach to nuclear security that involves reducing quantities of sensitive nuclear material, reducing the risk of unauthorized access to nuclear material, strengthening emergency preparedness, and improving nuclear forensics capabilities. The United States and Japan are also sharing and will continue to share best practices on a possible framework for an integrated national response to incidents of nuclear and radioactive materials found out of regulatory control.

The NSWG further facilitates bilateral cooperation on a range of issues including nuclear security training, the physical protection of nuclear material, safeguards, and transportation security. The United States especially applauds the indispensable role which the Japan Atomic Energy Agency's Integrated Support Center for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Nuclear Security (ISCN) is playing in the capacity building of personnel from other countries, particularly those from Asian countries, and expects ISCN to continue to serve as a leading Center of Excellence in this area.

In order to further strengthen cooperative efforts on preventing nuclear terrorism, and to continue to address Nuclear Security Summit goals, both sides have commenced negotiations on a framework to enable the exchange of classified information in the area of nuclear security, with the shared intention of reaching an agreement shortly. Japan and the United States will continue our NSWG under the U.S.-Japan Bilateral Commission on Civil Nuclear Cooperation, maintaining its leadership role in strengthening global nuclear security.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement—Nuclear Security Summit 2016 Communique
April 1, 2016

The threat of nuclear and radiological terrorism remains one of the greatest challenges to international security, and the threat is constantly evolving. We, the leaders, gathered in Washington, D.C. on the first day of April, 2016 on the occasion of the fourth Nuclear Security Summit, are proud to observe that the Summits have since 2010 raised awareness of this threat and driven many tangible, meaningful and lasting improvements in nuclear security. The Summits have also strengthened the nuclear security architecture at national, regional and global levels, including through broadened ratification and implementation of international legal instruments regarding nuclear security. We underline the importance of the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its 2005 Amendment and the International Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and will continue to work toward their universalization and full implementation. We welcome the imminent entry into force of the 2005 Amendment to the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and Facilities and encourage further ratifications.

We reaffirm our commitment to our shared goals of nuclear disarmament, nuclear nonproliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy. We also reaffirm that measures to strengthen nuclear security will not hamper the rights of States to develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. We reaffirm the fundamental responsibility of States, in accordance with their respective obligations, to maintain at all times effective security of all nuclear and other radioactive material, including nuclear materials used in nuclear weapons, and nuclear facilities under their control.

More work remains to be done to prevent non-state actors from obtaining nuclear and other radioactive materials, which could be used for malicious purposes. We commit to fostering a peaceful and stable international environment by reducing the threat of nuclear terrorism and strengthening nuclear security.

Sustaining security improvements requires constant vigilance at all levels, and we pledge that our countries will continue to make nuclear security an enduring priority. We, as leaders, are conscious of our responsibility. Actions taken today can prevent tomorrow's nuclear security incidents. Where we choose to take such steps visibly, in light of national conditions and while protecting sensitive information, we contribute to strengthening and building confidence in the effectiveness of our national nuclear security regimes.

Countering nuclear and radiological terrorism demands international cooperation, including sharing of information in accordance with States' national laws and procedures. International cooperation can contribute to a more inclusive, coordinated, sustainable, and robust global nuclear security architecture for the common benefit and security of all.

We reaffirm the *essential responsibility and the central role* of the International Atomic Energy Agency in strengthening the global nuclear security architecture and in developing international guidance, and its leading role in facilitating and coordinating nuclear security activities among international organizations and initiatives and supporting the efforts of States to fulfill their nuclear security responsibilities. We welcome and support the Agency in convening regular high-level international conferences, such as the December 2016 international conference on nuclear security including its Ministerial segment, to maintain political momentum and continue to raise awareness of nuclear security among all stakeholders.

We seek to maintain the international network of officials and government experts who have supported the Summit process and to incorporate the broader community of States, as well as encourage the continued engagement of relevant partners in nuclear industry and civil society.

In our continued collective determination to ensure political momentum and to continuously

strengthen nuclear security at national, regional, and global levels, we resolve to implement the attached Action Plans, in support of the international organizations and initiatives to which we respectively belong (the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency, INTERPOL, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, and the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction), to be carried out on a voluntary basis and consistent with national laws and respective international obligations. These plans reflect the political will of participating States.

The 2016 Summit marks the end of the Nuclear Security Summit process in this format. We affirm that the Communiqués from the 2010, 2012 and 2014 Summits and the Work Plan of the 2010 Summit will continue to guide our efforts as we endeavor to fully implement them.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement on Sustaining Action To Strengthen Global Nuclear Security
April 1, 2016

The Nuclear Security Summit process has led to significant achievements in nuclear security at national, regional, and global levels; but the work of building a strengthened, sustained, and comprehensive global nuclear security architecture—consisting of legal instruments, international organizations and initiatives, internationally accepted guidance, and best practices—requires continuous attention.

We need sustained action and ambition on nuclear security after the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit to address continuing and evolving nuclear security challenges, with the objectives of advancing implementation of nuclear security commitments and building a strengthened, sustainable and comprehensive global nuclear security architecture.

The Governments of Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Republic of Korea, Romania, Poland, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Vietnam, and the following international organizations: INTERPOL and United Nations, aiming to facilitate cooperation and sustain activity on nuclear security after the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit, commit to:

- *Establish a Nuclear Security Contact Group; and*
- *Designate an appropriately authorized and informed senior official or officials to participate in the Contact Group.*

The Contact Group is tasked with:

- Convening annually on the margins of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and, as may be useful, in connection with other related meetings;
- Discussing a broad range of nuclear security–related issues, including identifying emerging trends that may require more focused attention;
- Promoting and assessing implementation of nuclear security commitments, including those made during the Nuclear Security Summit process, reflected in the four Nuclear Security Summit Communiqués, the 2010 Washington Work Plan, the 2016 Action Plans, national commitments and associated joint statements, and gift baskets;
- Developing and maintaining linkages to nongovernmental experts and nuclear industry; and,
- Determining any additional steps that may be appropriate to support these goals.

The Contact Group may also consider and make recommendations to their respective leaders on convening any future Nuclear Security Summits.

We welcome the participation of all countries that subscribe to the goals set out in this Joint Statement and wish to contribute to the work of the Contact Group.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

The President's News Conference
April 1, 2016

The President. Good evening, everybody. I want to begin by thanking the people of Washington, DC, for hosting us, especially for putting up with more than 50 motorcades. And I will make one promise to the people of this city: I will not hold another one of these summits in another 6 years. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank everyone who participated in our meetings, more than 50 leaders from every region of the world and key international organizations. As at our previous summits, we didn't just come here to talk, but we came here to act. I know that the very technical nature of nuclear security doesn't always make for flashy headlines. But over the past 6 years, we have made significant, meaningful progress in securing the world's nuclear material so that it never falls into the hands of terrorists. And I want to take a few moments to step back and lay out exactly what we have accomplished.

Together, we have removed the world's most deadly materials from nuclear facilities around the world. With Japan's announcement today, we've now removed or secured all the highly enriched uranium and plutonium from more than 50 facilities in 30 countries: more than 3.8 tons, which is more than enough to create 150 nuclear weapons. That's material that will never fall into the hands of terrorists.

Fourteen nations and Taiwan—countries as diverse as Argentina and Chile, to Libya and Turkey, to Serbia and Vietnam—have now rid themselves entirely of highly enriched uranium and plutonium. And particularly, I want to point out again that successfully removing all of Ukraine's highly enriched uranium 4 years ago meant that the very difficult situation in Ukraine over the past 2 years was not made even more dangerous by the presence of these materials.

As of today, South America—an entire continent—is completely free of these dangerous materials. When Poland completes its removal this year, central Europe will be free of them as well. When Indonesia completes its work this year, so will all of Southeast Asia. In other words, as terrorists and criminal gangs and arms merchants look around for deadly ingredients for a nuclear device, vast regions of the world are now off limits. And that is a remarkable achievement.

We've made important progress in the United States as well. In addition to the new steps I announced this morning, we've improved nuclear security and training. We've consolidated nuclear materials at fewer facilities, eliminated some 138 tons of our surplus highly enriched uranium, which would be enough for 5,500 nuclear weapons. Working with Russia, we're on track to eliminate enough Russian highly enriched uranium for about 20,000 nuclear weapons, which we are converting to electricity here in the United States.

More specifically, as a result of these summits, every single one of the more than 50 nations represented here have taken concrete steps to enhance security at their nuclear facilities and storage sites. And that includes improved physical security, stronger regulations, abiding by international guidelines, greater transparency, and that includes international peer reviews. Fifteen new centers have been created around the world to promote nuclear security technologies and training, to share best practices. And as part of our work today, we agreed to keep strengthening our nuclear facilities' defenses against cyber attacks.

We've bolstered international efforts to disrupt nuclear smuggling. The Proliferation Security Initiative has grown to more than 100 nations, including regular exercises to improve our collective ability to interdict shipments. The United States and 36 partner countries have worked to install radiation detection equipment at more than 300 international border crossings, airports, and ports. And we are developing new mobile detection systems as well. And finally, as I noted this morning, we've strengthened the treaties and international partnerships that are a foundation for so many of our efforts.

So, again, we have made significant progress. And everyone involved in this work—especially our teams, who have worked tirelessly for years—can take enormous pride in our achievements. Nevertheless, as I said earlier, our work is by no means finished. There's still a great deal of nuclear and radioactive material around the world that needs to be secured. Global stocks of plutonium are growing. Nuclear arsenals are expanding in some countries with more small, tactical nuclear weapons, which could be at greater risk of theft. And as a consequence, one of the central goals of this summit was, how do we build on the work that has been done so that we have an international architecture that can continue the efforts, even though this is the last formal leaders' summit?

So, even as this is the last of those leader-level summits, today we agreed to maintain a strong architecture, including through the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and INTERPOL, to carry on this work and to provide the resources and technical support that is needed to continue this mission. And we are creating a new nuclear security contact group—senior-level experts from more than 30 of our countries—who will meet regularly to preserve the networks of cooperation we've built, to institutionalize this work, and to keep driving progress for years to come.

At our session on ISIL this afternoon, there was widespread agreement that defeating terrorist groups like ISIL requires more information sharing. Everybody understands the urgency in the wake of what's happened in Brussels and Turkey, Pakistan, and so many other countries around the world. As a consequence, our Director of National Intelligence, Jim Clapper, is continuing to engage with intelligence leaders from a number of our European partners on deepening our cooperation. And today I invited all the nations represented at this summit to join a broader discussion among our intelligence and security services on how we can improve information-sharing within and among our nations to prevent all manner of terrorist attacks, especially those that might involve weapons of mass destruction.

In closing, I just want to say that preventing nuclear terrorism is one part of the broader agenda that I outlined 7 years ago in Prague: stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and seeking a world without them. In recent days, there's been no shortage of analysis on whether we've achieved our vision, and I'm the first to acknowledge the great deal of work that remains, from negotiating further reductions with Russia to dealing with North Korea's nuclear program.

As I indicated in Prague, realizing our vision will not happen quickly, and it perhaps will not happen in my lifetime. But we've begun. The United States and Russian nuclear arsenals are on track to be the lowest that they have been in six decades. I've reduced the number and role of nuclear weapons in our nuclear security strategy. In a historic deal, we've prevented the spread of nuclear weapons to Iran. An international fuel bank is being built to promote civil nuclear cooperation.

So I'm extremely proud of our record across the board. And we're going to keep pushing forward wherever we can, as I hope future administrations do, to bring us closer to the day when these nuclear dangers no longer hang over the heads of our children and our grandchildren.

With that, let me take a few questions. And I'm going to start with Roberta Rampton of Reuters.

Iran

Q. Thank you. I want to ask about Iran. And 3 weeks ago, Iran's Supreme Leader com-

plained that his country has not been getting actual business deals since the nuclear agreement. And non-U.S. companies are saying that it's very hard, or sometimes impossible, to do much business with Iran without at some point accessing the U.S. financial system to do U.S. dollar–denominated transactions. So my question is, are you considering allowing such transactions? And if so, is that not a betrayal of your assurances that most U.S. sanctions would stay in place?

The President. That's not actually the approach that we're taking. So let me say broadly that so long as Iran is carrying out its end of the bargain, we think it's important for the world community to carry out our end of the bargain.

They have, in fact, based on the presentations that were made by the IAEA this morning to the P5-plus-1, have, in fact, followed the implementation steps that were laid out. And as a consequence, sanctions related to their nuclear program have been brought down. Part of the challenge that they face is that companies haven't been doing business there for a long time and they need to get comfortable with the prospects of this deal holding.

One of the things that Secretary Lew and his counterparts within the P5-plus-1 and elsewhere are going to be doing is providing clarity to businesses about what transactions are, in fact, allowed. And it's going to take time over the next several months for companies and their legal departments to feel confident that, in fact, there may not be risks of liability if they do business with Iran.

And so some of the concerns that Iran has expressed we are going to work with them to address. It is not necessary that we take the approach of them going through dollar-denominated transactions. It is possible for them to work through European financial institutions as well. But there is going to need to be continued clarification provided to businesses in order to—for deal flows to begin.

Now, what I would say is also important is Iran's own behavior in generating confidence that Iran is a safe place to do business. In a deal like this, my first priority, my first concern was making sure that we got their nuclear program stopped, and material that they already had that would give them a very short breakout capacity, that that was shipped out. That has happened. And I always said that I could not promise that Iran would take advantage of this opportunity and this window to reenter the international community.

Iran, so far, has followed the letter of the agreement. But the spirit of the agreement involves Iran also sending signals to the world community and businesses that it is not going to be engaging in a range of provocative actions that might scare business off. When they launched ballistic missiles with slogans calling for the destruction of Israel, that makes businesses nervous. There is some geopolitical risk that is heightened when they see that taking place.

If you see—if Iran continues to ship missiles to Hizballah, that gets businesses nervous. And so part of what I hope happens is we have a responsibility to provide clarity about the rules that govern so that Iran can, in fact, benefit, the Iranian people can benefit from an improved economic situation. But Iran has to understand what every country in the world understands, which is, businesses want to go where they feel safe, where they don't see massive controversy, where they can be confident that transactions are going to operate normally. And that's an adjustment that Iran is going to have to make as well.

And frankly, within Iran, I suspect there are different views. In the same way that there are hardliners here in the United States who, even after we certify that this deal is working, even after our intelligence teams, Israeli intelligence teams, say this has been a game changer, are still opposed to the deal on principle, there are hardliners inside of Iran who don't want to see Iran open itself up to the broader world community and are doing things to potentially undermine the deal.

And so those forces that seek the benefits of the deal not just in narrow terms, but more broadly, we want to make sure that, over time, they're in a position to realize those benefits. Okay?

David Nakamura [Washington Post].

Counterterrorism Strategy/U.S. Drone Strikes

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. As you mentioned at the beginning of your remarks, you just finished a working session with 50 world leaders about combating terrorism and groups like the Islamic State. And I wanted to ask you specifically about one of the strategies—prime strategies—your administration is using in that effort. In the past several weeks, your administration has killed well over 200 people in airstrikes in Somalia, Libya, and Yemen, according to the Department of Defense. How can you be certain that all the people killed posed an imminent threat to the United States? And why is the United States now killing scores of people at a time, rather than eliminating individuals in very targeted strikes? Thank you.

The President. We have constructed a fairly rigid and vigorous set of criteria for us evaluating the intelligence that we receive about ISIL, where it might be operating, where Al Qaida is operating. These guidelines involve a whole range of agencies consulting extensively, and are then checked, double checked, triple checked before kinetic actions are taken.

And for the most part, our actions are directed at high-value targets in the countries that you just described, outside of the theater of Iraq and Syria. In some cases, what we're seeing are camps that after long periods of monitoring becomes clear are involved in in directing plots that could do the United States harm or are supporting ISIL activities or Al Qaida activities elsewhere in the world.

So, if after a long period of observation, we are seeing that, in fact, explosive materials are being loaded onto trucks and individuals are engaging in training in small arms and there are some of those individuals who are identified as couriers for ISIL or Al Qaida, then, based on those evaluations, a strike will be taken. But what we have been very cautious about is making sure that we are not taking strikes in situations where, for example, we think there is the presence of women or children or if it is in a normally populated area.

And recently, we laid out the criteria by which we're making these decisions. We declassified many elements of this. We are going to be putting forward and trying to institutionalize on a regular basis how we make these evaluations and these analyses.

I think it—in terms of the broader debate that's taken place, David, I think there's been in the past legitimate criticism that the architecture, the legal architecture around the use of drone strikes or other kinetic strikes wasn't as precise as it should have been, and there's no doubt that civilians were killed that shouldn't have been. I think that over the last several years, we have worked very hard to avoid and prevent those kinds of tragedies from taking place.

In situations of war, we have to take responsibility when we're not acting appropriately, or where we've just made mistakes even with the best of intentions. And that's what we're going to continue to try to do. And I—what I can say with great confidence is that our operating procedures are as rigorous as they have ever been and that there is a constant evaluation of precisely what we do.

Carol Lee [Wall Street Journal].

2016 Presidential Election/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Yes.

Q. You've spent 7 years now working on nonproliferation issues, and you said in your opening remarks that you hope that the next—future administrations do the same and make it a priority.

The President. Right.

Q. This week, one of—the Republican frontrunner to replace you said that perhaps North—South Korea and Japan should have nuclear weapons and wouldn't rule out using nuclear weapons in Europe. Did that come up at this summit? And just generally, what message does it send when a major-party candidate is articulating such a reversal in U.S. foreign policy? And also, who did you vote for in the Democratic primary? [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, first of all, it's a secret ballot, isn't it, Carol? Okay. [*Laughter*] All right, I—no, I'm not going to tell you now. [*Laughter*]

What do the statements you mentioned tell us? They tell us that the person who made the statements doesn't know much about foreign policy or nuclear policy or the Korean Peninsula or the world generally. [*Laughter*]

It came up on the sidelines. I've said before that people pay attention to American elections. What we do is really important to the rest of the world. And even in those countries that are used to a carnival atmosphere in their own politics want sobriety and clarity when it comes to U.S. elections because they understand the President of the United States needs to know what's going on around the world and has to put in place the kinds of policies that lead not only to our security and prosperity, but will have an impact on everybody else's security and prosperity.

Our alliance with Japan and the Republic of Korea is one of the foundations, one of the cornerstones of our presence in the Asia-Pacific region. It has underwritten the peace and prosperity of that region. It has been an enormous boon to American commerce and American influence. And it has prevented the possibilities of a nuclear escalation and conflict between countries that, in the past and throughout history, have been engaged in hugely destructive conflicts and controversies.

So you don't mess with that. It is an investment that rests on the sacrifices that our men and women made back in World War II when they were fighting throughout the Pacific. It is because of their sacrifices and the wisdom and—that American foreign policy makers showed after World War II that we've been able to avoid catastrophe in those regions. And we don't want somebody in the Oval Office who doesn't recognize how important that is.

Andrew Beatty [Agence France-Presse].

Turkey

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Yesterday you met with President Erdogan of Turkey hours after some fairly ugly scenes at the Brooking Institution. I was wondering, do you consider him an authoritarian?

The President. Turkey is a NATO ally. It is an extraordinarily important partner in our fight against ISIL. It is a country with whom we have a long and strategic relationship with. And President Erdogan is someone who I've dealt with since I came into office, and in a whole range of areas, we've had a productive partnership.

What is also true, and I have expressed this to him directly, so it's no secret that there are some trends within Turkey that I've been troubled with. I am a strong believer in freedom of the press. I'm a strong believer in freedom of religion. I'm a strong believer in rule of law and democracy. And there is no doubt that President Erdogan has repeatedly been elected through a democratic process, but I think the approach that they've been taking towards the press is one that could lead Turkey down a path that would be very troubling.

And we are going to continue to advise them to—and I've said to President Erdogan, remind him that he came into office with a promise of democracy. And Turkey has historically been a country in which deep Islamic faith has lived side by side with modernity and an increasing openness. And that's the legacy that he should pursue, rather than a strategy that involves repression of information and shutting down democratic debate.

Having said that, I want to emphasize the degree to which their cooperation has been critical on a whole range of international and regional issues and will continue to be. And so as is true with a lot of our friends and partners, we work with them, we cooperate with them. We are appreciative of their efforts. And there are going to be some differences. And where there are differences, we will say so. And that's what I've tried to do here.

I'll take one last question. This young lady right there.

Azerbaijan/Nuclear Security/Transnational Threats

Q. Thank you, President. Mr. President, what do you think——

The President. Where are you from, by the way?

Q. I am from Azerbaijan. How can Azerbaijan support in nuclear security issue?

The President. Well, Azerbaijan, like many countries that participated, have already taken a number of steps. And each country has put forward a national action plan. There are some countries that had stockpiles of highly enriched uranium that they agreed to get rid of. There are other countries that have civilian nuclear facilities, but don't necessarily have the best security practices, and so they have adopted better security practices.

There are countries that could potentially be transit points for the smuggling of nuclear materials, and so they've worked with us on border controls and detection. And because of Azerbaijan's location, it's a critical partner in this process.

I should point out, by the way, that although the focus of these summits has been on securing nuclear materials and making sure they don't fall into the hands of terrorists, the relationships, the information sharing, the stitching together of domestic law enforcement, international law enforcement, intelligence, military agencies, both within countries and between countries—this set of relationships internationally will be useful not just for nuclear material, but it is useful in preventing terrorism generally. It's useful in identifying threats of chemical weapons or biological weapons.

One of the clear messages coming out of this summit and our experiences over the last 7 years is an increasing awareness that some of the most important threats that we face are transnational threats. And so we are slowly developing a web of relationships around the world that allow us to match and keep up with the transnational organizations that all too often are involved in terrorist activity, criminal activity, human trafficking, a whole range of issues that can ultimately do our citizens harms. And seeing the strengthening of these institutions, I think, will be one of the most important legacies of this entire process.

Mark Landler [New York Times], since you had your hand up, I'll call on you. One last question.

Nuclear Security/U.S.-Russia Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty/Nuclear Nonproliferation

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I wanted to ask a question about nuclear policy. Through these past 7 years when you've pushed to rid the world of nuclear materials and fissile material, the U.S. nuclear industry has actually worked to improve miniaturization of warheads. And while it has not developed new classes of cruise missiles or warheads, it's worked to improve the technology. And that's prompted some in China and Russia to say, well, gee, we need to keep up. Are you concerned that the technological advances in the United States have had the effect of sort of undermining some of the progress you've made on the prevention side?

The President. I think it's a legitimate question, and I am concerned. Here's the balance that we've had to strike. We have a nuclear stockpile that we have to make sure is safe and make sure is reliable.

And after the START Treaty—START II Treaty that we entered into with Russia, we have brought down significantly the number of weapons that are active. But we also have to make sure that they're up to date; that their command-and-control systems that might have been developed a while ago are up to snuff, given all the technology that has changed since that time. And we have to make sure that our deterrence continues to work.

And so even as we've brought down the number of weapons that we have, I have wanted to make sure that what we do retain functions; that it is not subject to a cyber intrusion; that there's sufficient confidence in the system that it— we don't create destabilizing activity.

My preference would be to bring down further our nuclear arsenal. And after we completed START II, I approached the Russians—our team approached the Russians in terms of looking at a next phase for arms reductions. Because Mr. Putin came into power, or returned to his office as President, and because of the vision that he's been pursuing of emphasizing military might over development inside of Russia and diversifying the economy, we

have not seen the kind of progress that I would have hoped for with Russia.

The good news is that the possibilities of progress remain. We are abiding by START II. We're seeing implementation. And although we are not likely to see further reductions during my Presidency, my hope is, is that we have built the mechanisms and systems of verification and so forth that will allow us to continue to reduce them in the future.

We do have to guard against, in the interim, ramping up new and more deadly and more effective systems that end up leading to a whole new escalation of the arms race. And in our modernization plan, I've tried to strike the proper balance, making sure that the triad and our systems work properly, that they're effective, but also to make sure that we are leaving the door open to further reductions in the future.

But one of the challenges that we're going to have here is that it is very difficult to see huge reductions in our nuclear arsenal unless the United States and Russia, as the two largest possessors of nuclear weapons, are prepared to lead the way. The other area where I think we'd need to see progress is Pakistan and India, that subcontinent, making sure that as they develop military doctrines, that they are not continually moving in the wrong direction.

And we have to take a look at the Korean Peninsula, because the D.P.R.K., North Korea, is in a whole different category and poses the most immediate set of concerns for all of us, one that we are working internationally to focus on. And that's one of the reasons why we had the trilateral meeting with Japan and Korea, and it was a major topic of discussion with President Xi as well. Okay?

Thank you very much, everybody. Have a good weekend.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 6:09 p.m. in Halls D and E of the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, the President referred to Donald J. Trump, chairman and chief executive officer, Trump Organization, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate; and President Xi Jinping of China. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. A reporter referred to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei of Iran.

The President's Weekly Address
April 2, 2016

Hi, everybody. This week, I'm speaking to you from our Nuclear Security Summit. I welcomed more than 50 leaders from around the world to make sure we're working together to meet one of the greatest threats to global security: terrorists getting their hands on a weapon of mass destruction, like a nuclear weapon.

Fortunately, because of our efforts so far, no terrorist group has yet succeeded in obtaining a nuclear device or producing a dirty bomb using radioactive materials. But we know that Al Qaida has tried. ISIL has already used chemical weapons in Syria and Iraq. And if they ever got hold of a nuclear weapon or nuclear material, we have no doubt they'd use it.

That's why we've been leading a global effort to secure the world's nuclear materials. And with summits like this, we've made important progress. Working with other nations, we have removed or secured enough nuclear material for more than 150 nuclear weapons, material that will now never fall into the hands of terrorists.

All of South America is now free of these deadly materials. Central Europe and Southeast Asia are on track to be free of them later this year. That means that as terrorists and criminal gangs look around for the deadly ingredients for a nuclear device, vast regions of the world are now off limits. This is a remarkable achievement. And at this summit, we pledged to keep up our efforts to prevent the world's most deadly networks from obtaining the world's most deadly weapons.

Our summit was also another opportunity to make sure the world remains united and

focused on destroying ISIL. A majority of the nations who came here are part of our global coalition against ISIL. A number of our countries have been targeted by ISIL. Just about all our nations have seen citizens travel to join ISIL in Syria and Iraq.

In Syria and Iraq, ISIL continues to lose ground. Our coalition continues to take out its leaders, including those planning terrorist attacks against our countries. They're losing their oil infrastructure and revenues. Their morale is suffering.

As ISIL is squeezed in Syria and Iraq, it's lashing out elsewhere, as we've seen most recently—and tragically—from Turkey to Brussels. And during our summit, we focused on ways to step up our efforts to disrupt terrorist attacks. It requires even more cooperation to prevent the flow of foreign terrorist fighters and sharing more information and intelligence. That's why I invited all the nations represented at this summit to join us in a broader discussion among our intelligence and security services on how we can improve information sharing to prevent terrorist attacks.

This continues to be a difficult fight. But every day, our dedicated professionals—military, diplomatic, intelligence, counterterrorism, homeland security, law enforcement, and nuclear experts—are working to protect us. Because of the progress we made this week and over recent years, more of the world's nuclear material is secure. It's harder for terrorists to get at it. And as Commander in Chief, I want you to know that we're going to keep doing everything in our power to keep our Nation safe and strong and free.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:30 p.m. on April 1 in Room 152B of the Walter E. Washington Convention Center for broadcast on April 2. In the address, the President referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 1, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 2. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization
April 4, 2016

The President. It's a great pleasure to welcome back once again my good friend, the Secretary General of NATO, Secretary General Stoltenberg. We are marking the 67th anniversary of the NATO alliance, and NATO continues to be the linchpin, the cornerstone of our collective defense and U.S. security policy.

We had an excellent meeting that started with marking the tragedy that had taken place in Brussels and reinforcing the importance of us staying focused on ISIL and countering the terrorism that has seeped up into Europe and around the world.

And we agreed that one of the most important functions that NATO is performing and can continue to perform is to help in the training and assisting process for troops in Iraq, in Jordan, in many of the areas in the region. And we are continuing to cooperate on an ongoing basis about operations potentially in areas like Libya, where you have the beginnings of a government, and we can, I think, provide enormous help in helping to stabilize those countries.

We also discussed generally what's been happening in the southern flank of NATO. Traditionally, a lot of focus has been on the east, but we recognize that there are a broad set of challenges that have to be addressed all around the world. And NATO is going to be working with the European Union, for example, to help prevent the tragedies that we saw last summer of migrants taking very dangerous trips across waters to try to reach Europe. In cooperation with Turkey, Greece, and other countries, it's important for us to do that in a

way that is humane and thoughtful, even as we're also working together to try to bring an end to the Syrian conflict.

We had an excellent conversation about Afghanistan, in which NATO obviously has been an extraordinary partner with the United States. The coalition there continues to focus on assisting the Government and the Afghan national security forces in building up capacity, pushing back against the Taliban, and helping to—helping Afghans to provide security for their own country and, hopefully, being able to arrive at some sort of political settlement that would end decades of conflict and violence there. And we are grateful for the sacrifices that NATO countries have made. Their men and women have fought alongside U.S. troops. They have fought together, and they've died together. And in the Warsaw summit that is coming up, we expect to be able to follow through on the pledges that we've made to continue to support the Afghan people in those efforts.

And we discussed the eastern side of the equation. We continue to be united in supporting Ukraine in the wake of Russian incursions into Ukrainian territory. We continue to work in a training-and-assist fashion in helping support Ukraine develop its military capabilities defensively. We continue to provide reassurance to the frontline states there, our NATO allies, to make sure that they have not just reassurance of words, but that we have actually deployed concrete assets that let them know that article 5 means something and that we stand by our commitments to our allies. And I have in my budget put forward a quadrupling of the resources that we spend and dedicated a portion of that money to make sure that we've got ground brigades that send a clear message about our commitments to our NATO allies to the east.

That does not mean that we are not continuing to work with Russia to try to find resolution to the problems in Ukraine. We think it is important to maintain a dialogue, and NATO has continued to consult with Russia and, in very transparent fashion, indicate the firmness of our resolve to protect our values and our allies, but also our interest in being able to reduce tensions and the dangers of potential escalation.

So I just want to state how effective I think Secretary General Stoltenberg has been in managing a whole range of challenges. This is obviously a tumultuous time in the world. Europe is a focal point of a lot of these stresses and strains in the global security system. We are lucky to have a strong NATO Secretary General and a strong team that is such an excellent partner with us.

And it is because of the strength of NATO and the transatlantic partnership, this transatlantic alliance, that I'm confident that, despite these choppy waters, we will be able to continue to underscore and underwrite the peace and security and prosperity that has been the hallmark of the transatlantic relationship for so many decades. Jens.

Secretary General Stoltenberg. Thank you so much, Mr. President. It's always an honor to be here and especially on a day like this, because, as you said, today is the anniversary of our alliance; NATO was founded in this very city.

And that NATO is as important as ever, because NATO has been able to adapt to a more dangerous world, not least because of your personal commitment and your personal leadership, and we are very grateful for that.

We stand together in the fight against terrorism. Terrorism affects us all, from Brussels to San Bernardino, and all NATO allies contribute to the U.S.-led efforts to degrade and destroy ISIL. And just last week, we started training all the Iraqi officers, and we will continue to support the efforts of the United States and other countries to fight ISIL.

We also discussed how NATO can increase our support to other countries in the region and ensure and enable them to stabilize their own countries and to fight ISIL, and therefore, different ways of building local capacity is high on our agenda in NATO.

We welcome the progress we have seen in Libya when it comes to establishing a Government of national accord, and NATO stands

ready to provide support to the new Government in Libya.

We also addressed the migrant and the refugee crisis in Europe. NATO assists—helped the European Union, Turkey, Greece to handle the situation in the Aegean Sea, and NATO has deployed ships in the Aegean Sea.

Afghanistan is high on our agenda. Afghanistan is our biggest military operation ever. And it shows the importance of unity in North America and Europe, because our military operation in Afghanistan is a direct response to the terrorist attack against the United States on 9/11. And European, Canadian soldiers has fought together with their—with the American soldiers in Afghanistan for many, many years.

We are also responding to a more assertive Russia, responsible for aggressive actions in Ukraine. And I very much welcome, again, the leadership that you have shown in increasing our collective defense in Europe with the European Reassurance Initiative, which is, as you've proposed, going to be quadrupled in the budget you have proposed for the Congress.

This is really a strong example of the transatlantic bond, how the United States is important for the security of Europe and also over European allies—or the European allies are also stepping up, so together, we are now implementing the biggest reinforcement to our collective defense since the end of the cold war.

I will work together with all the NATO allies to make sure that they make good on the pledge they made together to increase defense spending. And this is about that we have to invest more in our security when tensions increases, and therefore, we have to make sure that we do what we promised, and that is to invest more in defense in the following years.

We will meet again in Warsaw at our summit. We have a lot to do, but I'm certain that we are—that we will deliver, because we have seen time and again that North America and Europe is able to deliver when we stand together in a strong NATO alliance.

So thank you once again for having me here. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:03 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Statement on the New York Legislature's Passage of Legislation To Raise the Minimum Wage and Require Employers To Provide Paid Family Leave to Employees

April 4, 2016

I commend Governor Andrew Cuomo and the State of New York for taking the historic step of creating a paid family leave program in the State and raising its minimum wage to support New York's working families. This action means more parents won't have to choose between their job and caring for their new children. It means more workers can earn a higher wage to help make ends meet. Since I first called on Congress to increase the Federal minimum wage in 2013, 18 States and more than 40 cities and counties have acted on their own, thanks to the strong leadership of elected officials, businesses, and workers who organized and fought so hard for the economic security families deserve. Now Congress needs to act to raise the Federal minimum wage and expand access to paid leave for all Americans.

Statement on the California Legislature's Passage of Legislation To Raise the Minimum Wage and Require Employers To Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees

April 4, 2016

I commend the California Legislature and Governor Jerry Brown for raising the minimum wage and expanding the security of paid sick leave for workers in their State. With these actions, California is expanding its promise to workers that they shouldn't have to lose a paycheck if they get sick and has ensured that workers will no longer be earning a wage that keeps too many families in poverty. Since I first called on Congress to raise the Federal minimum wage in 2013, 18 States and the District of Columbia have acted on their own to raise the minimum wage. States and cities are making progress in expanding paid leave. Now it's time for Congress to step up and do what is right for every hard-working American and for our economy.

Statement on the Death of Joseph Medicine Crow

April 4, 2016

In Crow, you'd say Dr. Joseph Medicine Crow was a *bacheitche*—a good man. The first of his people to go to college and earn a Master's, he wore war paint beneath his uniform and an eagle feather beneath his helmet during World War II. His bravery in battle earned him the Bronze Star from America, the Legion d'honneur from France, and in 2009, I was proud to honor him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Yet I suspect his greatest honor was one he earned from his people: the title of war chief—the last Crow to hold that distinction.

Dr. Medicine Crow dedicated much of his life to sharing the stories of his culture and his people. And in doing so, he helped shape a fuller history of America for us all. Michelle and I honor 102 years of a life well lived, and our thoughts and prayers are with his family and the entire Crow Nation.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Somalia

April 4, 2016

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13536 of April 12, 2010, with respect to Somalia is to continue in effect beyond April 12, 2016.

On January 17, 2013, the United States Government announced its recognition of the Government of Somalia. Our first U.S. Ambassador to Somalia in over two decades is awaiting Senate confirmation. Although these developments demonstrate progress with respect to Somalia's stabilization, they do not remove the importance of U.S. sanctions, especially against persons and entities who have threatened the peace, security, or stability of Somalia (including those responsible for acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia) or acted in violation of the United Nations

Security Council arms embargo. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Somalia and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Paul D. Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The letter referred to U.S. Ambassador-designate to Somalia Stephen M. Schwartz. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Tax Code Reform and an Exchange With Reporters
April 5, 2016

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. I'm horning in on Josh's time just for a hot second. As we learned last week, America's economy added 215,000 jobs in March. That means that our businesses extended the longest streak of private sector job creation on record: 73 straight months, 14.4 million new jobs, unemployment about half of what it was 6 years ago.

Now, this progress is due directly to the grit and determination and hard work and the fundamental optimism of the American people. As I travel around the country, what always stands out is the fact that the overwhelming majority of folks work hard and they play by the rules, and they deserve to see their hard work rewarded. They also deserve to know that big corporations aren't playing by a different set of rules, that the wealthiest among us aren't able to game the system.

That's why I've been pushing for years to eliminate some of the injustices in our tax system. So I am very pleased that the Treasury Department has taken new action to prevent more corporations from taking advantage of one of the most insidious tax loopholes out there and fleeing the country just to get out of paying their taxes. This got some attention in the business press yesterday, but I wanted to make sure that we highlighted the importance of Treasury's action and why it did what it did.

This directly goes at what's called corporate inversions. They are not new. Simply put, in layman's terms, it's when big corporations acquire small companies and then change their address to another country on paper in order to get out of paying their fair share of taxes here at home. As a practical matter, they keep most of their actual business here in the United States because they benefit from American infrastructure and technology and rule of law. They benefit from our research and our development and our patents. They benefit from American workers, who are best in the world. But they effectively renounce their citizenship. They declare that they're based somewhere else, thereby getting all the rewards of being an American company without fulfilling the responsibilities to pay their taxes the way everybody else is supposed to pay them.

When companies exploit loopholes like this, it makes it harder to invest in the things that are going to keep America's economy going strong for future generations. It sticks the rest of us with the tab. And it makes hard-working Americans feel like the deck is stacked against them.

So this is something that I've been pushing for a long time. Since I became President, we've made our Tax Code fairer, and we've taken steps to make sure our tax laws are actually enforced, including leading efforts to crack down on offshore evasion. I will say that it gets tougher sometimes when the IRS is starved for resources and squeezed by the congressional appropriation process so that there are not enough people to actually pay attention to what all the lawyers and accountants are doing all the time. But we have continued to emphasize the importance of basic tax enforcement.

In the news over the last couple of days, we've had another reminder in this big dump of data coming out of Panama that tax avoidance is a big, global problem. It's not unique to other countries because, frankly, there are

folks here in America who are taking advantage of the same stuff. A lot of it is legal, but that's exactly the problem. It's not that they're breaking the laws, it's that the laws are so poorly designed that they allow people, if they've got enough lawyers and enough accountants, to wiggle out of responsibilities that ordinary citizens are having to abide by.

Here in the United States, there are loopholes that only wealthy individuals and powerful corporations have access to. They have access to offshore accounts, and they are gaming the system. Middle class families are not in the same position to do this. In fact, a lot of these loopholes come at the expense of middle class families, because that lost revenue has to be made up somewhere. Alternatively, it means that we're not investing as much as we should in schools, in making college more affordable, in putting people back to work rebuilding our roads, our bridges, our infrastructure, creating more opportunities for our children.

So this is important stuff. And these new actions by the Treasury Department build on steps that we've already taken to make the system fairer. But I want to be clear: While the Treasury Department actions will make it more difficult and less lucrative for companies to exploit this particular corporate inversions loophole, only Congress can close it for good, and only Congress can make sure that all the other loopholes that are being taken advantage of are closed.

I've often said the best way to end this kind of irresponsible behavior is with tax reform that lowers the corporate tax rate, closes wasteful loopholes, simplifies the Tax Code for everybody. And in recent years, I've put forward plans—repeatedly—that would make our tax system more competitive for all businesses, including small businesses. So far, Republicans in Congress have yet to act.

My hope is that they start getting serious about it. When politicians perpetuate a system that favors the wealthy at the expense of the middle class, it's not surprising that people feel like they can't get ahead. It's not surprising that oftentimes it may produce a politics that is directed at that frustration. Rather than doubling down on policies that let a few big corporations or the wealthiest among us play by their own rules, we should keep building an economy where everybody has a fair shot and everybody plays by the same rules.

Rather than protect wasteful tax loopholes for the few at the top, we should be investing more in things like education and job creation and job training that we know grow the economy for everybody. And rather than lock in tax breaks for millionaires or make it harder to actually enforce existing laws, let's give tax breaks to help working families pay for childcare or for college. And let's stop rewarding companies that are shipping jobs overseas and profit overseas and start rewarding companies that create jobs right here at home and are good corporate citizens.

That's how we're going to build America together. That's how we battled back from this great recession. That's the story of these past 7 years. That can be the story for the next several decades if we make the right decisions right now. And so I hope this topic ends up being introduced into the broader political debate that we're going to be having leading up to election season.

Okay? And with that, I turn it over to Mr. Josh Earnest.

Iran/Corporate Tax Avoidance

Q. A question about the Panama Papers, Mr. President?

The President. Yes.

Q. Given the release of these millions of pages of financial information, are you concerned that that reflects on the ability of the Treasury Department to sort of be able to see all the financial transactions across the globe—they clearly didn't see these—and whether that suggests that the sanctions regime that you've put in place in a bunch of places around the world might not be as strong as you think it is?

The President. Well, we know the sanctions regime is strong because Iran wouldn't have, for example, cut a deal to end their nuclear program in the absence of strong sanctions enforcement.

But there is no doubt that the problem of global tax avoidance, generally, is a huge problem. It's been brought up in G–7 meetings. It's been brought up in G–20 meetings. There has been some progress made in coordinating between tax authorities of different countries so that we can make sure that we're catching some of the most egregious examples.

But as I said before, one of the big problems that we have, Michael [Michael D. Shear, New York Times], is that a lot of this stuff is legal, not illegal. And unless the United States and other countries lead by example in closing some of these loopholes and provisions, then in many cases, you can trace what's taking place, but you can't stop it. And there is always going to be some illicit movement of funds around the world. But we shouldn't make it easy. We shouldn't make it legal to engage in transactions just to avoid taxes.

And that's why I think it is important that the Treasury acted on something that's different from what happened in Panama. The corporate inversions issue is a financial transaction that is brokered among major Fortune 500 companies to avoid paying taxes. But the basic principle of us making sure that everybody is paying their fair share and that we don't just have a few people who are able to take advantage of tax provisions, that's something that we really have to pay attention to.

Because as I said, this is all net outflows of money that could be spent on the pressing needs here in the United States. And the volume that you start seeing when you combine legal tax avoidance with illicit tax avoidance or some of the activities that we're seeing, this is not just billions of dollars. It's not even just hundreds of billions of dollars. Estimates are, this may be trillions of dollars worldwide, and it could make a big difference in terms of what we can do here.

I'm going to take one more question, and then I'm going to turn it over to Josh. One last one, go ahead.

2016 Presidential Election

Q. Mr. President, the Republican frontrunner today outlined his plan to——

The President. Oh, no, it's—[*laughter*].

Q. ——pay for a wall along the border——

Q. Climate change?

Q. ——barring undocumented immigrants in the U.S. from sending money back home. What would be the real implication of this plan? And are his foreign policy proposals already doing damage to U.S. relations abroad?

The President. The answer to the latter question is yes. I think that I've been very clear earlier that I am getting questions constantly from foreign leaders about some of the wackier suggestions that are being made. I do have to emphasize that it's not just Mr. Trump's proposals. I mean, you're also hearing concerns about Mr. Cruz's proposals, which in some ways are just as draconian when it comes to immigration, for example.

The implications with respect to ending remittances—many of which, by the way, are from legal immigrants and from individuals who are sending money back to their families—are enormous. First of all, they're impractical. We just talked about the difficulties of trying to enforce huge outflows of capital. The notion that we're going to track every Western Union bit of money that's being sent to Mexico, good luck with that.

Then, we've got the issue of the implications for the Mexican economy, which in turn, if it's collapsing, actually sends more immigrants north because they can't find jobs back in Mexico. But this is just one more example of something that is not thought through and is primarily put forward for political consumption.

And as I've tried to emphasize throughout, we've got serious problems here. We've got big issues around the world. People expect the President of the United States and the elected officials in this country to treat these problems seriously, to put forward policies that have been examined, analyzed, are effective, where unintended consequences are taken into account. They don't expect half-baked notions coming out of the White House. We can't afford that.

All right? I'm turning it over to Josh. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest; and Donald J. Trump, chairman and chief executive officer, Trump Organization, and Sen. Edward R. "Ted" Cruz, in their capacity as Republican Presidential candidates.

Remarks During a Meeting With Department of Defense Leadership
April 5, 2016

Well, good afternoon. This is one of my regular meetings with Secretary of Defense Carter, General Dunford, and our entire military leadership, including our Joint Chiefs of Staff and our combatant commanders from all around the world.

And these meetings are always an opportunity for me to review our defense strategy broadly, the priorities in the budget that can realize that strategy, and most importantly, it gives us an opportunity to talk about our incredible men and women in uniform and the sacrifices they make and the health of the force, and making sure we're doing right by them.

Secretary Carter spoke earlier today about how we have to make sure that the Department of Defense is fully organized and has all the tools that it needs to meet a wide range of emerging threats. I am very pleased that our budget agreement that we signed last year allowed us to get some relief out of sequestration. Those were some harmful cuts on both the defense and the nondefense side. But because of that relief and building on that, the budget that has been proposed makes sure that we're investing in our national security, our global leadership, and our economic security here at home.

We're investing in capabilities that our military needs to deter aggression and defend our security and that of our allies. And this includes increases in our posture in Europe to reassure our NATO allies in light of particularly increased aggressive actions by Russia. It allows us to enhance our maritime cooperation in the Asia-Pacific. It allows us to boost cybersecurity, which is going to be an increasing threat that has to be addressed. It allows us to invest in the future of our force, support our military families, and make sure that our technological edge is maintained relative to forces all around the world.

This will also be an opportunity for us to review the military campaign against ISIL. And although he is not here—because today was his retirement ceremony—I think this is a great opportunity to salute General Lloyd Austin. He served our Nation in uniform for nearly 41 years, including his repeated tours in Iraq. As commander of Central Command, he oversaw the operations from Afghanistan to Iraq and our campaign against ISIL. He did an outstanding job in every single assignment that he received. We are profoundly grateful to General Austin, his wife Charlene, and the entire Austin family.

Our military campaign against ISIL is now being led by General Votel. And Joe has brought incredible skill and dedication to his most recent prior assignment, heading up our special forces. We are working to make sure that we're accelerating the campaign against ISIL. In Syria and Iraq, ISIL continues to lose ground. Coalition forces recently severed the main highway between ISIL's strongholds in Raqqa, Syria, and Mosul in Iraq. And we continue to take on their leadership, their financial networks, their infrastructure. We are going to squeeze them, and we will defeat them.

But as we've seen from Turkey to Belgium, ISIL still has the ability to launch serious terrorist attacks. One of my main messages today is that destroying ISIL continues to be my top priority. And so we can no longer tolerate the kinds of positioning that is enabled by them having headquarters in Raqqa and in Mosul. We've got to keep on putting the pressure on them.

And obviously, that is not just a military operation. That is an intelligence and diplomatic effort as well. And so one of the things we'll

talk about here is how we make sure that we coordinate our military activities with the efforts of our other branches of government.

This will continue to be a difficult fight, but I'm absolutely confident that ISIL will lose. We will prevail. And once again, this allows me to say thank you not only to these distinguished members of our Armed Forces, our core leadership that makes things happen day in, day out, but it also is a good opportunity for me, once again, to say thank you for the incredible men and women in uniform and their families who carry such an enormous burden in order to keep us free and in order to keep us safe.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:13 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., USMC; and Gen. Joseph L. Votel III, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Statement on the Retirement of General Lloyd J. Austin III
April 5, 2016

On behalf of a grateful nation, I congratulate General Lloyd Austin on his retirement after nearly 41 years of service to our country. General Austin's character and competence exemplify what America demands of its military leaders. Over the last 3 years as commander, U.S. Central Command, General Austin has overseen military operations in one of the most demanding regions of the world, including operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and our broader counter-ISIL campaign. I have relied on his wise judgment and steadfast leadership to help me navigate the many challenges we find there. Additionally, as commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, General Austin was instrumental in allowing Iraqis to take the lead for securing the future of their own country. These are among his many accomplishments over a storied military career. I am certain that General Austin will find other ways to serve his country in retirement, and Michelle and I wish him, his wife Charlene, and his family well as they begin another chapter of their lives.

NOTE: The statement referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Budget Amendments for Fiscal Year 2017
April 5, 2016

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Budget amendments for the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Education, Homeland Security, State and Other International Programs, and Transportation, as well as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia, the Surface Transportation Board, and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Also included is an amendment to a general provision included in Title VI of the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Act, 2016, that would affect the Federal Trade Commission. These amendments are necessary to reflect correctly policies assumed in my FY 2017 Budget. These amendments would increase by $4 million the overall discretionary budget authority in my FY 2017 Budget.

This transmittal also includes FY 2017 Budget amendments for the Legislative Branch. As a matter of comity and tradition, these appropriations requests for the Legislative Branch are transmitted without change. These amend-

ments would decrease by $25 million the overall discretionary budget authority in my FY 2017 Budget.

Moreover, provided for your consideration are FY 2017 amendments for the Department of Energy. Included is an amendment that would initiate modernization of Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) infrastructure, which is at the end of its design life, as well as fund SPR marine terminal distribution capacity enhancements. Consistent with authorities provided in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015, these initiatives would be funded by the sale of crude oil from the Reserve in FY 2017. Also included are two offsetting amendments that would provide an increased amount to fund a portion of settlement costs related to the February 2014 incidents at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad, New Mexico, including the associated activities at Los Alamos National Laboratory. The FY 2017 budget authority totals would not be affected by these amendments.

Taken together, the transmitted amendments would decrease by $21 million the overall discretionary budget authority in the FY 2017 Budget.

The details of these amendments are set forth in the enclosure from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks During a Question-and-Answer Session on the United States Supreme Court at the University of Chicago Law School in Chicago, Illinois
April 7, 2016

University of Chicago Gerald Ratner Distinguished Service Professor of Law David A. Strauss. Well, Mr. President, this is a tremendous honor for the University and the law school. Welcome back.

The President. It is good to be back. It is good to be back. I—as some of you may know, I actually spent 10 years teaching classes and seminars here, and it was really fun. [*Laughter*] And I missed it. And I thought, well, why don't I come back and say hi to everybody.

And so I—there are a couple of people I want to acknowledge because they helped to facilitate this. First of all, I want to thank Dean Miles for closing down the school, I guess, for a day. Thank you. Special acknowledgements for Geoff Stone and Doug Baird, who were great friends when I was teaching here and were partly responsible for having me actually take on some responsibility straight out of law school to mold the minds of students who were just barely younger than me. I can—I know that because I—some of them I saw and they all have gray hair now—[*laughter*]—which is a little troubling.

We've got a terrific congressional delegation who's here, and I just want to acknowledge them. First of all, your outstanding senior Senator from the great State of Illinois, Dick Durbin is here. And we've got Congressman Bobby Rush, Congressman Danny Davis, Congressman Bill Foster, and Congressman Mike Quigley. We also have Lisa Madigan, the attorney general of Illinois and my former seatmate in Springfield when we were both in the State Senate together, and is doing a terrific job.

And I want to thank David, who I was joking before we came out, is one of the country's foremost constitutional experts and a nice guy. [*Laughter*] And you guys are lucky to have him. In fact, when I was teaching here, I think that I stole his Con Law class for a while, and he graciously gave it up because despite the privilege of grading 60 or 70 bluebooks—[*laughter*]—he apparently thought it was important for me to have that privilege as well.

So, last thing I'll say by way of introduction: I had a chance to talk to some young people over in the overflow room, mostly students, and I just said to them that having now been in politics for quite some time, seeing what lawyers are capable of doing every single day, working on a whole range of issues that are of huge importance to our democracy and to our

society, I hope that all the students here are excited about the incredible changes and good that you are going to be able to do when you get out of here.

I know that sometimes the news feeds cynicism and democracy at this moment seems particularly frustrating. But each and every day, I see lawyers not that much older than you who are helping young people get an education, are making sure that consumers are protected, are helping to keep America safe, are ensuring that our health care system works for everybody, are helping to preserve the planet and fight against climate change. It is remarkable what you can do with your talents. And it doesn't always get a lot of publicity, but you can make a really meaningful difference.

So one of the reasons I wanted to come back is to recruit you—[*laughter*]—to stay engaged, get involved, make a difference. It doesn't mean you have to run for office. It doesn't mean you even have to work for government. There are a lot of ways of serving. But I do hope that one of the things that you will take away from our discussion today and your extraordinary education here at the University of Chicago is the incredible high that you can get from serving this country.

So, with that, what do you want to talk about, David? [*Laughter*]

Supreme Court Nominee Merrick B. Garland/Supreme Court Nomination Process

Mr. Strauss. Well, let me start back when you were here as a teacher. I know you taught Constitutional Law, so you were thinking about the Supreme Court and thinking about the Justices and what would make someone a—what made someone a great Justice or a successful Justice. But you're in a different spot now.

The President. Mm-hmm. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Strauss. Has your thinking changed?

The President. Surprisingly, not as much as you would have expected. Obviously, we're having a substantial argument in Washington right now about not just a particular judge, but also about the process of appointing judges to the Federal courts and appointing nominees to the Supreme Court.

And to get this out of the way, Merrick Garland is an extraordinary jurist who is indisputably qualified to serve on the highest court of the land. And nobody really argues otherwise. I mean, I just want to be clear here. If the question is qualifications and excellence, it is uniformly viewed by not just Democrats, but also Republicans—those who have served him, lawyers, judges, legal scholars, members of the current Supreme Court—that he is as good of a judge as we have in this country right now; that he's fair, he's smart, he's objective. He's a consensus builder. He shows judicial restraint. He's appreciative of the unique role of the Court, but also respectful of the role of the other branches of government.

So no one has plausibly made an argument that this is not the kind of person we'd want on the Supreme Court. The question then becomes, why is it so hard for the guy just to get a hearing and a vote?

And this speaks to what's happened, generally, when it comes to the process of appointing Federal judges. It used to be that people read the Constitution and Article II powers fairly straightforwardly. It says the President shall make these nominations with the advice and consent of the Senate. And unless there was some sort of real problem with that judge's character or qualifications, it was fairly routine at every level—both at the district court level, the appellate court level, and the Supreme Court—that the person would be confirmed in short order. There would be a hearing. People would ask the potential judge a question or 2 or 5 or 10. There would be questionnaires. And once they had satisfactorily performed that process, then the Senate would vote.

And it was presumed—it was understood—that just as the President had a constitutional duty to make the appointment that the Senate had a constitutional duty to at least make a determination as to whether this person should be on the bench.

What has been unique in this process has been the growing attitude inside of the Senate that every nomination, no matter how well

qualified a judge is, is a subject of contention. In some cases, it's simply because one party or the other wants to gum up the works and so they will drag out confirmations longer and longer. Even if, ultimately, the judge gets confirmed by voice vote, by unanimous consent in the Senate, they'll drag it out for 2 or 3 months, because if you're bogged down with judges, then it means other business can't be done. So sometimes, it's just strategic.

In other cases, the view has been that despite all the talk about people wanting objective judges who are just calling balls and strikes and don't bring any views to bear, that there are litmus tests that are applied that prevent a judge from getting a fair vote, even though they're qualified, because they don't meet the particular views of the party that's objecting.

And this problem got bad enough in previous administrations, but came to a head under my administration, in which we had a situation where we were starting to see 6 months pass or 9 months pass before a judge could get a hearing. It was—this was when Democrats were in charge of the Senate, but because of the particular rules of the filibuster that previously had been used for just a few things, but now were routinely deployed on everything, we just couldn't get judges through. And you started seeing a crisis in vacancies across districts and circuits everywhere.

Finally, the Democrats said, we're ending the ability for Senate Members to filibuster when it comes to district court and appellate court Justices, but we're going to preserve it for the Supreme Court.

We now have a situation, after Judge Scalia's passing, in which it's not just that the Republican majority in the Senate intend to vote against a highly qualified judge, we now have a situation where they're saying, we simply will not consider the nomination itself. We're just going to shut down the process. And as a consequence, we have a 4–4 tie in the Supreme Court and potentially at least two Supreme Court terms in which this vacancy will remain.

That is unprecedented. Not only are they not willing to hold a vote at this point, they have refused to hold hearings on Judge Garland. And in some cases, Mitch McConnell and others have said, we will not even show the courtesy of meeting with the judge to find out what he thinks. And I think what's important for all of you to understand—because you're going to be not just lawyers appearing in court, potentially, but custodians of our legal system and our democracy—is if you start getting into a situation in which the process of appointing judges is so broken, so partisan that a eminently qualified jurist cannot even get a hearing, then we are going to see the kinds of sharp, partisan polarization that have come to characterize our electoral politics seeping entirely into the judicial system. And the courts will be just an extension of our legislatures and our elections and our politics.

And that erodes the institutional integrity of the judicial branch. At that point, people lose confidence in the ability of the courts to fairly adjudicate cases and controversies. And our democracy can't afford that. Our system is designed to make sure that this branch works. And it requires a broad consensus, even if we don't agree on any particular ruling, that the Court's rulings itself are legitimate and consistent with our democratic design. And that's why this is so important. It's not just a matter of who is occupying that ninth seat in the Supreme Court. It has to do with how we, as a democracy, operate and the particular authority that a court has to bring in order for our democracy to work.

That was a really long answer. [*Laughter*] Others will not be as long. [*Laughter*]

Supreme Court Nomination Process/U.S. Political System

Mr. Strauss. Well, let me ask you about that, Mr. President. I mean, how did we get to this point? You hear sometimes that the problem is the Supreme Court has injected itself into political issues, and so of course, it gets enmeshed in politics. But the Supreme Court has been controversial almost from the beginning: from the Jeffersonians' attack on the Marshall Court——

The President. Yes.

Mr. Strauss. ——all the way through the "Impeach Earl Warren" billboards——

The President. Right.

Mr. Strauss. ——in parts of the country in the fifties and sixties. And we haven't had this before.

The President. Right.

Mr. Strauss. So what is there—do you have an explanation for what it is that's brought us to this position?

The President. I think there are a variety of explanations. First of all, it's important to underscore what you just said. And all of you law students, even if you're not critical legal theorists or what have you—[*laughter*]—I think, just from reading cases, you will acknowledge that there's politics in legal rulings. There's—when we make decisions about right, wrong, what are the rules governing our society, et cetera, that that's an extension of our broader political and democratic conversation. Nobody is denying that.

And you're right. There have been controversies in the past about how we should decide the balance between liberty and security, about how do we treat minority groups to assure that they are protected from majority rule. How do we make sure that the political process itself has integrity and that our votes count? Those are all issues where passions are real and people have opinions. And there's nothing wrong with that.

But I think what changed was when the Congress itself, and the Senate in particular, began to change. I think in some ways the judicial process is a casualty of some broader trends in our democracy. First of all, our politics have become much more polarized. There's been something called the great sorting, right, because of gerrymandering, because of how our media works where folks either watch Fox News or they read the New York Times, but rarely do both. [*Laughter*] Positions get hardened and reinforced. Partisans are carrying more weight within each party. The notion of a liberal Republican or a conservative Democrat, those things broke down. And so politics itself got more polarized.

That then fed into a culture in Congress in which basic comity and habits of courtesy and process and institutional respect for people that you didn't agree with—those things began to break down. The filibuster, as I said, started becoming just standard practice. There's nothing in the Constitution that says every item that comes before the Senate is supposed to get a supermajority. It used to be that the filibuster—it doesn't have a very distinguished history—was used principally for blocking civil rights and antilynching and voting rights legislation. That was bad enough. It then suddenly became the norm for everything as minority parties started to decide that they wanted to block what the majority of Senators were in favor of. And so all of this, I think, contributed to the—a breakdown of the process.

Now, in fairness, Democrats are not blameless on this. If you talk to Republicans, they'll also point—often point to the Bork nomination as where this all started. And there have been times where Democrats used the filibuster to block what Republican Presidents or conservative legal theorists viewed as eminently qualified jurists. The—I will say that there has not been a circumstance in which a Republican President's appointee did not get a hearing, did not get a vote, and as a general proposition, they have been confirmed even where there have been strong objections.

So what you have here is, I think, a circumstance in which those in the Senate have decided that placating our base is more important than upholding their constitutional and institutional roles in our democracy in a way that is dangerous. And there are other examples of it, but this judicial nomination process, I think, has become an extreme example of that.

The President's Supreme Court Nominee Selection Criteria/Supreme Court Nominee Merrick B. Garland

Mr. Strauss. Let me take you back a step to how—to your thinking about when you're making an appointment.

The President. Right.

Mr. Strauss. And again, I'm going to try to put it in an historical context a little bit. You

have Presidents who really set out to reshape the Court. And Franklin Roosevelt may be the clearest example. He was determined to find Justices who would uphold——

The President. Right.

Mr. Strauss. ——New Deal legislation. Richard Nixon wanted Justices who would limit the rights of people accused of crimes.

The President. Right.

Mr. Strauss. And that's sort of one model.

And then you have Presidents who did not have any particular agenda. And I think President Eisenhower is an example. He appointed three of the great Justices of the 20th century: Chief Justice Warren, Justice Harlan, Justice Brennan. But his appointees came from different backgrounds——

The President. Right.

Mr. Strauss. ——no ideology, no identifiable tendency in the way they thought about the Constitution.

The President. Right.

Mr. Strauss. So do you see yourself as one of those models or as something different from both?

The President. There's no doubt that in making my appointments, the values of the Justice matter to me. And what I mean by that is not how they'd rule on a particular issue. In fact, we're very careful when I interview candidates not to ask them about a particular case or controversy that might make it seem as if I want a particular outcome. But what I've been consistently looking for—and this is what I saw in Justice Sotomayor, what I saw in Justice Kagan—is people who, number one, have intellectual integrity. And what that means is, is that they look at the facts and the law, and even if it's uncomfortable to them, they don't like the outcome, they follow the law, and they recognize that that's their job.

Number two, that they bring a humanity to the job. And what I mean by that is that, particularly on the Supreme Court, 9 out of 10 cases—well, certainly in the Federal courts—9 out of 10 cases, you can probably arrive at an outcome just by applying basic tenets of constitutional interpretation. There's not going to be a lot of controversy. The cases that really matter are the ones where there's ambiguity, where there's a lack of clarity, where it requires constitutional principles being applied in a way that is true to precedent, is true to basic legal tenets, but also that understands the unique role of the Court in making sure that people who are locked out of the political process, for example, are not permanently locked out, that they have some recourse; that we have Justices who understand how the world works so that they are not entirely blind to the history of racial discrimination or gender discrimination or how money operates in our world.

Not because that necessarily leads them to rule on a particular issue, but because it means that when they're looking at a tough case in which statute or the Constitution does not provide a—an immediate, ready answer, that they can apply judgment, grounded in how we actually live and the ideals and principles that have made this such an extraordinary country. I want them to have lived a little and be able to see the wide spectrum of people that they're going to be wielding this enormous power over.

And so a lot of times, when I talk to the candidates for the judiciary, I spend time asking about their families and them growing up and what were formative experiences in their minds. And in some ways, that reveals more than anything.

And then, part of the reason that I think that Merrick Garland would be such an extraordinary judge is not just because he's already been an extraordinary judge, but I think about his life story. And I mentioned this in the introduction: When he was a high school kid, as class valedictorian, and he's got a student speaking ahead of him who lambasts the Vietnam war, and parents are trying to unplug the guy's mike, and Merrick comes in and, not because he necessarily agrees with the student, but impromptu, provides a vigorous defense of free speech. As a 17- or 18-year-old kid, that tells me about—something about him. It gives me confidence that this is somebody who's thought about what our core values and ethics are as a society.

When you hear about the work he did in the Oklahoma City bombing, and he's presiding over the investigation at the Justice Department, and the fact that he was meticulous in how he conducted that investigation and didn't cut corners, even though, in the wake of those kinds of terrorist attacks, oftentimes, it's convenient, because people aren't going to call you on it, to cut corners, and at the same time, how he kept the program mourning the deceased from the memorial because he knew that there—each one of those people who had been killed and each one of those families had been affected in such profound ways—that tells me something about who he is.

And that, as much as anything, I think, is going to give me confidence that that's the kind of person where, if I'm before a judge, I want to make sure that I've got somebody who's got—who's wise and who cares about people and is not arbitrary and can provide confidence to the justice system. And I also think part of the reason I thought Merrick was ideal now is precisely because of all the polarization we were talking about earlier. What a good moment for us to have somebody who is respected by both sides and who Chief Justice Roberts served with on the appellate court and befriended and consistently said—despite being on the opposite ends of a bunch of decisions—said this is somebody who, if he says you're wrong, you've got to think long and hard about it.

He embodies and models what it is that we want to see in our jurisprudence.

Role of the Supreme Court

Mr. Strauss. So let me sort of pick up on that. I mean, as you know, some people on the left were disappointed with your choice of Chief Judge Garland. They thought you should have appointed someone who would be more aggressive in moving the Court in a certain direction. And I just—sort of, I guess what I want to say is, those of us who knew you back then could have said you shouldn't be surprised, because if I remember correctly—and correct me if I don't—when you were teaching Constitutional Law, there are people in that line of work who hold up the Warren Court as the model and say the Court's job is to be really on the front lines of attacking society's problems.

The President. Right.

Mr. Strauss. And you were, if I remember correctly, you were skeptical of that when you were a law professor. So am I right in remembering that, and has the skepticism carried over?

The President. No, no, I think you're right about this. It's an adage in Con Law, and you're familiar with this—probably the students are too—that the courts are a terrific shield, but they're not always a very effective sword. And what I mean by that is, is that there have been moments in history—*Brown* v. *Board of Education* being the best example and, on the other end of the spectrum, a decision like *Dred Scott,* which was antithetical to what we'd want to see a court do—there are certain moments where, like in *Brown*, that the democracy has broken down in a fundamental way. The majority has shut down access for the petitions for redress from a minority group. There are times where an individual who is engaging, let's say, in highly unpopular speech is not going to be able, through the political process, to uphold the values that we, collectively, have decided are pretty important to uphold.

And so, in those circumstances, I have a very progressive view of how the courts should operate. But as I think Judge Garland said, being a Federal judge doesn't mean that you are—you have this broad writ to simply remake society. Ideally, you've got a political process that does that: that we argue about issues and we elect representatives and we get votes and we pass bills and we get a new administration and they overturn stuff that we passed. And it's rough, and it's tumble, and it's not always elegant, but that's the constitutional design. And it has the benefit of making sure that separation of powers and decentralization of power in our society keeps this lumbering ship moving in a pretty good direction.

And so it has—it's been rare—and this is by design—that the Court engages in massive social engineering. Now, I care deeply about—

there are a whole range of progressive causes that I will continue to fight for as long as I have a breath. I believe in a society that is doing something about climate change in an aggressive way. I believe in a society that—in which every child is able to get a decent education and opportunity. I believe that everybody should have health care in a society that's wealthy; it's not a privilege, it's a right. I believe that our criminal justice system is flawed in a whole range of ways.

A couple of weeks ago, or maybe it was last week, I had lunch with a sampling of the people that I've pardoned for nonviolent drug offenses. And I've got a woman sitting next to me who, at a very young age, in her early twenties, was sentenced to life in prison for a nonviolent drug offense. It's crazy. It makes no sense. It was unjust and counterproductive and leaves huge scars not just in that woman's family and her children, but in our society as a whole.

So there are a whole bunch of things I've done as President and I intend to continue to do and to advocate for. Those are not things, though, that typically a Supreme Court Justice is in the position to get done. They don't have taxing power. They don't necessarily have the expertise to be designing programs to get at the things that we care about. And so I have a—I do have a modesty in terms of my expectations for what the Court should do.

But I want the Court to do what it should do really well. I want a court that does believe that equality under the law is equality under the law, not just the words, but that it is operationalized, that it's real. I want a court that is treating a poor, indigent criminal defendant the same as a wealthy criminal defendant, and that justice is blind with respect to——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I—she agrees with me. [*Laughter*]

So modesty in the scope and the nature of what the law is, but doing really well what the Court is designed to do: that's what I'm looking for in a Justice.

Mr. Strauss. I think we can open it up to questions.

The President. Good. Let's open it up to questions. With the—there you go, a little Socratic method here. [*Laughter*] State the case! [*Laughter*] No, I'm teasing, I'm teasing. This young lady right here in the green. Yes.

Q. Hi. So——

The President. Do we have a mike? Yes. Let's give them mikes so everybody can hear you. Introduce yourself, by the way.

Criminal Justice Reform/Opioid Addiction

Q. Hi.

The President. Hi.

Q. So my name is Amelia.

The President. Hey, Amelia.

Q. I actually had the opportunity to ask you a question when I was 15 years old in New Hampshire.

The President. Wow. [*Laughter*]

Q. So I'm really happy to——

The President. Are you a student here now?

Q. I am. I'm a 1L.

The President. That's very cool. Did I answer your question the last time?

Q. You did, very well. [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank goodness. All right, what do you got?

Q. So I'm really happy to hear that you said you were going to continue to push for the issues that you care about, because I, of course, believe that the push for the Supreme Court nomination is incredibly important.

The President. Right.

Q. I'm just a little concerned that other issues could get left behind. One such issue, for example, is criminal justice reform—specifically mass—the problem of mass incarceration.

The President. Right.

Q. So I was wondering if you could speak to what more you'll do in your last 10 months to address this issue.

The President. Great. It's a great question. We're in this really interesting moment where generally Congress is thoroughly unproductive—not, by the way, because of the Members of Congress who are here, but—[*laughter*]—who are all doing great work—[*laughter*]—but in the aggregate, it's not doing much.

One exception has been this growing interest, this movement in criminal justice reform. And it's bipartisan, and it's sincere on the part of all sides on this. And it's an interesting convergence. You have fiscal conservatives who have been seeing how expensive it is to incarcerate people year after year after year and how it's breaking the bank, particularly at the State level, where if you track spending on public education and spending on incarceration over the last 20, 25, 30 years, there is almost a direct line between more people in jail and less support for public universities, for example. So there's a fiscal concern.

You've got a libertarian strand of conservatives who really believe, why is it the government's business if somebody is taking—smoking pot, let's say, and why would we want to jail them for 20 years? You've got a very sincere evangelical movement that oftentimes is involved in reentry programs or prison ministries and so have embraced the idea of a second chance.

And so you combine that with law enforcement that I think has begun to recognize that a lot of how we have prosecuted the war on drugs has been unproductive and that recidivism is inevitable if people are getting no skills. They're incarcerated for decades, and then we're just releasing them with no possible support. And then, the longstanding progressive view that a lot of our criminal justice system has been tainted by racial discrimination and class bias. All those things are converging.

And so now we've got some really interesting coalitions. You've got the ACLU and the Koch brothers agreeing on this, which does not happen often. [*Laughter*] Dick Durbin has been one of the key leaders in the Senate in shaping a criminal justice reform bill that has a real chance of passage. And the—I think it's really important to understand the nominations process with Judge Garland is not holding back our ability to move forward.

I mean, it would be one thing if Mitch McConnell was saying, man, that's going to take so long to schedule all the hearings and the votes, and we won't have time because we're just so busy—[*laughter*]—that we can't then do criminal justice instead. But since there has been a spike in the number of days off in this Congress, and typically, a judicial confirmation takes less than 3 months from the time that person is nominated—Judge Alito, for example, took 82 days—this is something that shouldn't prevent us from getting done the criminal justice issues.

I think what's been tougher is just managing the traditional politics around being soft on crime versus being tough on crime. And right now, because crime rates—sadly, except for in certain neighborhoods in Chicago and a few other cities—have been going down in ways that are remarkable and nobody can fully explain, there is less profit in saying I'm going to be tough on crime.

But there is always a hesitance on the part of legislators, because very rarely is a politician punished for having been too tough on crime and sentencing. But occasionally, à la Willie Horton, they feel that a vote that can be perceived as lenient might come back to bite them.

The good news is, so far at least, people have stuck with it. And I'm modestly optimistic that we can get something done this year. It won't solve the problem of mass incarceration, because that was a process that took 20, 30 years to get to where we are now, where we account for 5 percent of the world's population and 25 percent of the world's prisoners, so it's going to take some time to reverse. But the legislation that's pending right now provides meaningful reductions in the standards for sentencing around nonviolent drug crimes. It does some very important work in terms of reentry, diversion programs. It breaks this psychology that we just have to lock people up in order to keep ourselves safe.

One last element to this that has been interesting is the opioids crisis that some of you may have read about. Right now painkillers—overdoses of people taking painkillers kills more people than traffic accidents. I mean, it's a remarkable statistic. There has been this huge spike in painkiller addiction, and it—which is then leading to heroin addiction, because oftentimes heroin is cheaper than painkillers.

And four out of five people who get addicted to heroin start their addiction with OxyContin or some other painkiller addiction. And unlike crack, it's not just affecting inner-city African American or Latino communities. It's widespread. It's pervasive. It's seeping into rural areas. And it's a tragic issue that we are really spending a lot of time focused on.

But what's interesting is, is that the politics of this changes a little bit where when elected officials see kids who are like their kids getting hooked and going through these terrible things, there's been a greater predisposition to think of this as a public health issue rather than a criminal justice and incarceration issue.

And that's—I'm just being blunt—that's the truth. But it actually has had an impact in terms of an openness, I think, to reexamining some of our drug laws.

Good question. I'm sure your question 8 years ago was really good too. [*Laughter*]

All right, I'm going to go boy, girl, boy, girl—[*laughter*]—just to make sure this is fair. We monitor these things. [*Laughter*] Yes, gentleman right here, in the tie. You. Yes, you look sharp. [*Laughter*] Do you wear a tie every day to class or—[*laughter*]?

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Oh. That's good, man.

Democratic Party/U.S. Political System

Q. I'm Jimmy. I'm also a 1L. I've never asked you a question before. [*Laughter*]

The President. Okay.

Q. So this might not go very well. [*Laughter*] But I've written it down so, hopefully, I can read. Mr. President, we are currently in the midst of a polarizing, political election cycle dividing both major parties along populist and establishment fault lines. Do you anticipate this divergence within the Democratic Party widening to the extent we saw with the Tea Party's emergence within the ranks of the Republican Party? And if not, what do you worry about for the future of the Democratic Party?

The President. Short answer is, no, I don't. The cleavages inside the Democratic Party are not comparable to what we're seeing in the Republican Party right now. The argument inside the Democratic Party is a little bit more about means, less about ends.

If you look at our two Democratic candidates, they believe that everybody should get health care. They believe that every child should get a good education. They believe that climate change is real and that we should do something about it. They believe in equality for the LGBT community. Right? I mean, if you go through the list, there's not a huge divergence there.

I think that in the Democratic Party, there is a populist impulse that grows out of what I also think has happened for folks who are voting in the Republican primary, this frustration in the wake of the financial crisis and the bottom falling out for people who lost their jobs or lost their homes or lost their pensions; that the world is moving fast, the ground is not firm under their feet. And even before that crisis, wages and incomes were not going up at the same pace as productivity, corporate profits, and so forth. And so there is a sense, the game is rigged. And we have to more fundamentally change that game, that system, whether it's Wall Street or how Washington operates or what have you.

Some of that impulse is healthy. I mean, I think I—you want people to be asking hard questions about injustice economically and the way that insiders in the political process may not fully represent the interest of everyone.

The danger, whether for Democrats or Republicans, is in a closed-loop system where everybody is just listening to the people who agree with them, that you start thinking the way to get to where I want to go is to simply be as uncompromising as possible and hold the line and not pay attention or listen to what the other side has to say. And if I—and that is sort of a Tea Party mentality. And that anybody who suggests, well, there's another point of view or there's a whole half of the country that completely disagrees with us that we have to work with, well, then you must be a sellout, or you must be corrupted, or you must be on the take, or what have you.

And that is not, I think, useful. And the reason—it's not to say that there isn't corruption,

that there isn't compromise, or people compromising principles for less-than-noble means, et cetera. Those things happen, and they should be called out.

But a lot of the reason why a lot of Democrats who supported me and still support me got frustrated is because a bunch of the country doesn't agree with me or them, and they have votes too, and they elect Members of Congress. And that's how our democracy works. It's not a situation, if you don't get everything you want, it's not always because the person you elected sold you out. It may just be because in our system, you end up taking half loaves.

I could not be prouder of the Affordable Care Act, but it was a messy process. It doesn't have a public option. It's not single-payer. If I were designing a system from scratch, I would have designed a more elegant system and a more efficient system. But that's not what was possible in our democracy, in the same way that Social Security, when it first started, was a meagerly program providing benefits to just a few people and historically cut out for purely racist reasons domestic servants or sharecroppers or what have you. And then, over time, you kept on improving it. That's how change generally happens.

And I think the thing that Democrats have to guard against is going in the direction that the Republicans are much further along on, and that is this sense of we are just going to get our way, and if we don't, then we'll cannibalize our own and then kick them out and try again, and we narrow our viewpoints more and more until finally, we stake out positions that are so extreme that they alienate the broad public.

I don't see that being where the Democrats go. But it's always something that we have to pay attention to.

Okay, yes.

Q. My name is Shahrzad Daneshvar——

The President. Here, why don't you wait for the mike.

Supreme Court Nomination Process

Q. Oh. Thank you so much for being here. My name is Shahrzad Daneshvar, and I'd like to know how have your views on the Supreme Court nomination process changed since you taught Constitutional Law here at the University of Chicago.

The President. My views on how it should work hasn't changed. My views on how it currently works obviously are a source of frustration. Look, just to kind of wrap up this Supreme Court conversation, I think it is perfectly acceptable for Republicans to decide that even though Merrick Garland is highly qualified, even though he's indisputably a good and fair judge, even though he's gotten the highest ratings from all the bar organizations and others that have examined his record, that I just don't agree with him on X, Y, Z, and I'm going to vote against him because I believe in something different on important issues.

What's not acceptable is not giving him a vote, not giving him a hearing, not meeting with him. What's not acceptable, I believe, is the increasing use of the filibuster for somebody who's clearly within the mainstream or to essentially say that we are going to nullify the ability of a President who is from another party from making an appointment. And we're going to wait to see if maybe we can get a guy from our party to make the appointment. That is where you have a process foul that corrodes the ability of the Court to function effectively.

Now, if you play out how this—how much of a problem this could end up being—if in fact Mitch McConnell sticks to not giving a hearing and not giving a vote, and let's say, from their perspective, everything works out great and their nominee, whoever that might be, wins and takes over the White House, and they, then, make an appointment—the notion that Democrats would then say, oh, well, we'll just go along with that—[*laughter*]—I mean, that is inconceivable. Right?

So now the Democrats say, well, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. We're blocking—we'll wait 4 more years to see how the next President comes in, right? At which point, what's most likely then is Mitch McConnell will then eliminate the filibuster possibility for Supreme Court Justices, as was eliminated for the other judicial appointments.

And now it's just a majoritarian exercise inside the Senate of who controls the Presidency and who controls the Senate. And if different parties control the White House and the Senate during that period of time, you're not going to get any appointments done, which is a disaster for the courts, generally.

For two reasons. One is, there's a lot of work that needs to get done, and you need judges. And right now there are emergency situations in districts across the country. But the second thing that happens is, people will, at that point, just become more and more cynical about decisions that are coming down from the Court. They're already cynical because so much of so many opinions just end up being straight 5–4, and it starts feeling like this is just a partisan alignment. But it gets much worse under these circumstances. People then just view the courts as an extension of our political parties—polarized political parties.

And if confidence in the courts consistently breaks down, then you start seeing our attitudes about democracy generally starting to break down and legitimacy breaking down in ways that are very dangerous.

So, okay. It's a gentleman's turn. Right here in the front. I am impressed by the way you guys did all get dressed up. [*Laughter*] Was there a memo sent out? Did the Dean say, all right, you guys, we want you to all—because you all aren't going to class like this. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Strauss. They are not.

The President. I know. I remember. [*Laughter*]

Privacy/Political Participation/Voting Rights

Q. Hello, Mr. President. Thank you very much for being here with us today. My name is Kyle Panton. I'm a 2L here at the law school. My question for you is, what sorts of constitutional questions were at the forefront of your mind when deciding who your nominee would—should be? And what sorts of constitutional questions do you think Americans should be asking themselves when assessing your selection and thinking about the 2016 Presidential election?

The President. That's interesting. Well, I will tell you, as I said before, I was—I'm very careful not to delve too specifically into a candidate's position on live issues. I mean, you're a well-informed 2L, you know the issues that people debate. There's a standard set of social issues that have been roiling society and the courts for a long time, whether it's LGBT rights or abortion or civil rights.

There are—what's interesting is, there are a set of new issues that are going to be coming up that, for your generation, I think are going to be increasingly salient. One great example is this whole debate around encryption, which I think is just the tip of the iceberg of what we're going to have to figure out. In a society in which so much of your life is digitized, people have a whole new set of privacy expectations that are understandable. They also expect, though, that since their lives are all digitized, that the digital world is safe, which creates a contradictory demand on government: Protect me from hackers, protect me from terrorists, protect me from et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, but I don't want you to know any of your business, and I don't even want you to have the ability to investigate some of that business when it happens because of its broader implications and we're worried about Big Brother. And so there's going to be a whole series of issues around that that I think will be coming up.

I think there are a range of economic issues that date back very far, to the earliest days of the Court, and were prominent during the Great Depression and FDR's era that have gone into abeyance—people don't pay attention to them as much in terms of monopoly concentration or antitrust issues, et cetera—but I think in this current environment are going to be becoming more prominent over time. All right?

So—and then, political participation issues and voting issues, I think, and money in politics issues—that's a whole series of issues that I do believe are an important role for the Court to play. Because if we're not effectively setting the rules of the political process, if that is delegitimized, then whatever outcomes are generated are subject to just endless contention.

And this is separate from the judiciary. This is your President editorializing. [*Laughter*] We

really are the only advanced democracy on Earth that systematically and purposely makes it really hard for people to vote. And we sort of take it for granted. I mean, we sort of just assume, well, yes, that's, I guess, how it is. There's no other country on Earth that does that. And there's a legacy to that, I mean, that grows directly out of a history in which first propertied men, then White men, then White folks didn't want women, minorities to participate in the political process and be able to empower themselves in those—in that fashion.

Now, that's the history. We should be a society in which, at this point, we said, yes, that's—that history wasn't so good, that's not who we are, and there was a Civil War fought about all this stuff, and we passed a whole series of laws like the Voting Rights Act, and at this point, we should be at the point where we say, you know what, we want everybody to vote, because that's the essence of our democracy. And we—but we have not just Federal laws, but State laws, that unabashedly discourage people from voting, which is why we have some of the lowest voting rates of any advanced democracy in the world.

And that's a problem. That's not something that—I'm saying that to Congress, as well as to the Presidency, as well as to Governors, as well as State legislators, as well as to courts. That can't be right. It—there's no justification for that. You can't defend it.

And I've always said—and this goes back to the young man's question earlier about political polarization—maybe the single biggest change that we could make in our political process that would reduce some of the polarization, make people feel more invested, restore integrity to the system, would be just make sure everybody is voting. Australia has got mandatory voting. You start getting 70-, 80-percent voting rates, that's transformative.

All right. How much time do we have, by the way?

Staffer. Time for one more, sir.

The President. How many?

Staffer. One more, sir.

The President. We'll take two. [*Laughter*] Young lady in the green, right there in the sweater. Yes, that's you. Yes. You didn't remember what you were wearing today, did you? [*Laughter*]

Diversity

Q. Hardly—oh, okay. No, that's all right. So I think we can agree that in our Nation, we celebrate diversity: diversity of ethnicities, of races, of backgrounds. And I'm just wondering—oh, of course, at U Chicago, diversity of ideas. [*Laughter*] I'm just wondering what diverse characteristics Judge Garland would bring to the Supreme Court.

The President. Well, he's from Skokie—[*laughter*]—I think, which is very important. [*Laughter*] It's a great place. It's a great town. The way I've thought about diversity is not to think about any single seat as, oh, I've got to fill this slot with this demographic, but rather, if I've got a broad set of nominees to make, and this is true across the board, how do I make sure that I'm intentional throughout that process so that the talent of every American is—and every potential candidate gets a fair look? And I have confidence that if I stick to that, if I do that, if I make sure that I'm broadening the search, broadening the pool, looking at a bunch of folks even if they're not going through the conventional paths, that I'll be able—that I'll end up—the process will result in diversity.

And that, in fact, is what's happened. I am—not to brag—[*laughter*]—but I have transformed the Federal courts from a diversity standpoint with a record that's been unmatched. We've got more African Americans on the circuit courts than we ever had before. We've got—I've appointed more African American women to the Federal courts than any other President before. I've appointed more Latinos than any President before. I've appointed more Native Americans, more Asian Americans, more LGBT judges than ever before.

But at no point did I say, oh, you know what, I need a Black lesbian from Skokie—[*laughter*]—in that slot. That's—can you find me one? [*Laughter*] You know? I mean, that's just not how I've approached it. It turns out that if

the process is fair and you are saying that it's important that our courts are reflective of a changing society, you'll end up with a really good cross-section of people who are excellent. And that's who we've been able to appoint.

And so, when I look at Merrick Garland, that was the person that—the difference between the Supreme Court is it—just a handful of seats come up at any given time now. I appointed a Latino woman and another woman right before that, so, yes, he's a White guy, but he's a really outstanding jurist. Sorry. [*Laughter*] You know, he's the—I think that's important.

But this speaks to the broader debate about diversity that I think is important and obviously churns up in college campuses a lot. The question is, have you set up a process and are you intentional about giving everybody a shot? And are you thinking about roadblocks to why we're not seeing a more diverse population? And when you start asking those questions, in whatever institution—I mean, I just met with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the combatant commanders, sort of our key military leaders. And the U.S. military, interestingly, has probably done as good of a job as any institution in our society when it comes to integration and bringing diverse people in, but as you go up the ranks, you start seeing that it becomes less and less reflective of the broader population and the troops, the men and women in uniform who are coming in.

And so we've had a really interesting conversation about, well, what's happening? How much of this is that the young African American or Latino officer or woman officer isn't mentored by the person right above them and steered into particular assignments that are less likely to achieve a promotion? And what can we do about a different set of financial burdens that may exist? And if a lot of those folks are going into—as enlisted men and women, because that's the opportunity that was presented to them and nobody told them they could apply to West Point, what are we doing to find outstanding enlisteds, and saying, you'd make a good officer and we're going to groom you?

And all of that does—that's not as satisfying as, when it comes to publicity, as just checking a box and saying, look, I appointed this person or that person in any particular slot. But that's where you start changing systems and you start changing institutions and you end up with a really broad-based change in access. And that's something that I really care deeply about because, just as is true in the military, it's true generally. Look, our society is changing. You cannot have a successful America if we are leaving out big chunks of the population from opportunity and leadership. It just doesn't work.

It's the same argument I make internationally in countries that are still repressing women, saying, your society cannot work, it doesn't work if half—if more than half of your population is constrained. If the half of that population that is most likely to be raising your children and teaching the next generation is not getting opportunity, your society will fail over the long term. And that's just true generally.

So, all right, one last question.

Q. Immigration. What happens to your immigration——

The President. Excuse me, you were not called on. [*Laughter*] And you are a journalist. [*Laughter*] And I'm calling on students. So thank you very much. This isn't a press——

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. This wasn't a press conference.

So the—let's just see, it's a gentleman's turn. This gentleman right there.

U.S. Drone Program/Civilian Casualties in Military Operations/2011 U.S. Military Operation Targeting Usama bin Laden

Q. Hi, my name is Saif Kazim, I'm a 3L. If you don't mind, I'm going to read my question.

The President. It's okay. This is what I was saying about it—you guys and your phones. [*Laughter*] By the way, are you now—I'm assuming you can't carry your phones into court, can you?

Q. I think it depends. [*Laughter*]

The President. I'm just saying, you guys might want to practice. [*Laughter*]

Q. Yes, I'll work on it. [*Laughter*]

The President. Go on.

Q. I'll try to work on that. [*Laughter*] So one issue that Judge Garland would likely never be able to consider if he were confirmed concerns the President's authority to conduct drone strikes away from active battlefields. And these are strikes that you have continuously authorized on the basis of vague legal standards that you unilaterally deem to be satisfied in each case without ever appearing before a court and, in the process, killing hundreds of innocent civilians as well as, in some cases, American citizens. So my question is, how are these killings morally and legally justified? And what kind of message does this drone program send about America's values to the world, the American people, and to law students like myself who refuse to put our trust in an opaque process?

The President. Okay. I think that's a great question, although I will say that I will dispute some of the underlying premises that you asserted as facts. [*Laughter*] But I think it's an important topic, and it's a fair one.

When I came into office, we were still in the midst of two wars, in Iraq and Afghanistan. And in the border regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, Al Qaida was still highly active. And drone technologies began to develop in parallel with—had developed prior to my Presidency, but started to really accelerate in terms of the technology and the precision with which strikes could be taken.

And the challenge for me as Commander in Chief has consistently been, how do you think about this new technology in a way that is consistent with morality, ideals, laws of war, but is also consistent with my first priority as President and Commander in Chief, which is to keep all of you safe, including you?

And so I think it's fair to say that in the first couple of years of my Presidency, the architecture—legal architecture, administrative architecture, command structures—around how these were utilized was underdeveloped relative to how fast the technology was moving. So another way of saying this is, our military or our intelligence teams started seeing this as really effective. And they started just going because the goal was, let's get Al Qaida, let's get these leaders. There's a training camp here. There's a high-value target there. Let's move. And it was—the decisionmaking was not ad hoc, but it was embedded in decisions that are made all the time about a commander leading a military operation or an intelligence team trying to take out a terrorist. And there wasn't enough of an overarching structure, right?

So you may recall—but if not, I'm sure we can send it to you—I gave a speech at the National Defense University in which I said that we have to create an architecture for this because the potential for abuse—given the remoteness of these weapons and their lethality, we've got to come up with a structure that governs how we're approaching it. And that's what we've done. So I put forward what's called a—it's a Presidential directive. It's basically a set of administrative guidelines whereby these weapons are being used.

Now, we actually did put forward a nonclassified version of what those directives look like. And it says that you can't use these weapons unless you have near certainty that there will not be civilian casualties; that you have near certainty that the targets you are hitting are, in fact, terrorist organizations that are intending to do imminent harm to the United States. And you've got all the agencies who are involved in that process, they have to get together and approve that. And it goes to the highest, most senior levels of our Government in order for us to make those decisions.

And what I've also said is that we need to start creating a process whereby this—whereby public accountability is introduced so that you or citizens or Members of Congress outside of the Intelligence Committee can look at the facts and see whether or not we're abiding by what we say are these norms.

And we're actually—there's a lot of legal aspects to this because part of the problem here is, is that this drone program initially came through the intelligence side under classified programs, as opposed to the military. Part of what I've also said is, I don't want our intelligence agencies being a paramilitary organiza-

tion. That's not their function. As much as possible this should be done through our Defense Department so that we can report; here's why—what we did, here's why we did it, here's our assessment of what happened.

And so slowly we are pushing it in that direction. My hope is, is that by the time I leave office there is a—not only an internal structure in place that governs these standards that we've set, but there is also a institutionalized process whereby the actions that the U.S. Government takes through drone technology are consistently reported on on an annualized basis so that people can look.

And the reason I say—the reason this is really important to me—and this was implied in your question—is there is a lot of misinformation about this. There is no doubt—and I said this in an interview, I think, recently—there is no doubt that some innocent people have been killed by drone strikes. It is not true that it has been this sort of willy-nilly, let's bomb a village. It—that is not how it's—folks have operated. And what I can say with great certainty is that the rate of civilian casualties in any drone operation are far lower than the rate of civilian casualties that occur in conventional war.

So the irony—let's take an example like the bin Laden raid. This was as precise, as effective an operation that I don't think anybody would dispute was in the national security interests of the United States. And we put our best people in there who operate as precisely and as effectively as any group of individuals probably ever have in the history of the planet. And they executed their mission flawlessly. But there were a number of people who were killed in that who you might describe as not the targets of the mission: members of bin Laden's family, for example. Now, that would be counted as a civilian casualty under the standards that—from which you drew your information. And if you calculated it as a percentage, there was actually a pretty high civilian casualty rate for this extraordinarily precise mission.

Now, imagine during the height of the Iraq war or when we were still actively fighting in Afghanistan, the number of civilians who were killed in normal military operations. We talk about the number of U.S. troops that were killed in Iraq. The number of Iraqis that were killed—primarily by AQI and those we were fighting, but also by U.S. military that was trying to be as careful as possible in chaotic situations, like Fallujah or Ramadi—were in the tens of thousands.

So part of my job as President is to figure out how I can keep America safe doing the least damage possible in really tough, bad situations. And I don't have the luxury of just not doing anything and then being able to stand back and feel as if my conscience is completely clear. I have to make decisions because there are folks out there who are genuinely trying to kill us and would be happy to blow up this entire room without any compunction and are actively finding—trying to find ways to do it.

And I wish I could just send in Iron Man, or—[*laughter*]—no, no, I don't mean that as a joke. I just mean I wish I—that the tragedy of war, conflict, terrorism, et cetera, did not end up creating circumstances where we, wielding kinetic power, don't end up hurting anybody who shouldn't have been hurt.

But what I try to do is to set up the system as best as I can. And I think it is very important for those who are critics of the U.S. Government—and this includes folks on the outside—to examine the incredible progress that we've made over the course of a couple of decades. Because this conversation didn't even exist—it did not even cross the minds of people in the White House—as recently as 30 or 40 years ago. I mean, it wasn't even a factor. And we anguish over this in a very serious way.

But I—what I do think is a legitimate concern is, is that—the transparency issues. I think that the way that this got built up through our intelligence and what's called our Title 50 programs meant that it did not—it wasn't subject to the same amount of democratic debate as when we are conducting what are called Title 10 Department of Defense conventional operations. And that's done a disservice not only to the public being able to examine where we made mistakes and create corrective action, it's actually also done a disservice to the incredibly dedicated men and women in intelligence and

in operations who perform these operations who are subject to accusations that somehow they're irresponsible and bloodless and going around blowing up children, which is not the case.

And our popular media, I think, has been able to just project a whole bunch of scenarios that are generally not accurate.

I guess I should stop there. [*Laughter*] But thank you for the question. It was a legitimate one.

I'll end when I—where I started. Just based on the quality of the questions and your very sharp appearances—[*laughter*]—you guys have an enormous amount to contribute. Don't let the day-to-day noise and news and frustrations with our democracy discourage you from being involved.

I'm phasing out of this particular part of my life. But I've said this before—and this—I believed it when I was teaching here, I believe it even more now after having been President—the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. I really believe that. Change happens when citizens are informed, are engaged, are paying attention, are asking tough questions—asking tough questions of themselves, by the way, not just of others—not too comfortable in whatever dogmas that we all attach ourselves to. And you are learning the kind of critical thinking in this school that will allow you to become really good citizens. Use it.

Thanks.

Mr. Strauss. Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:43 p.m. in the Harold J. Green Law Lounge. In his remarks, he referred to Ramona Brant, Norman O. Brown, Angie Jenkins, Serena D. Nunn, Kemba N. Smith, and Michael D. Short, former prisoners who received commutations of their sentences; Dwight and DaJon Barber, sons of Ms. Brant; Charles G. Koch, chief executive officer and chairman of the board, and David H. Koch, executive vice president, Koch Industries, Inc.; William R. Horton, a convicted felon who was sentenced for crimes committed during a weekend furlough program in Massachusetts in 1986; former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sen. Bernard Sanders, in their capacity as Democratic Presidential candidates; and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., USMC. He also referred to the Al Qaida in Iraq (AQI) terrorist organization.

Statement on the 22d Anniversary of the Genocide in Rwanda
April 7, 2016

Twenty-two years after the genocide, we stand with the people of Rwanda to commemorate the more than 800,000 men, women, and children whose lives were lost during 100 days of unspeakable violence. We honor not just the victims, but also those who risked their lives to save others, as well as the survivors who carry the memories of these atrocities. On this solemn day, we remind ourselves of our common humanity and shared commitment to protecting civilians and ensuring that mass atrocities of this magnitude never happen again.

Today, even as the United States grieves with the Rwandan people, we are inspired by the progress Rwanda has made in moving beyond these horrible crimes and in building a more peaceful and prosperous future for its citizens. The United States Government and the American people will continue to extend our friendship and partnership to Rwanda as we reconfirm our commitment to protecting the vulnerable, to preventing mass atrocities, and to upholding the inherent dignity of every human being.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner in Los Angeles, California

April 7, 2016

The President. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. Have a seat. Well, first of all, let me just say that I love Cindy and Alan and the family—the Horn family. They have just been such great friends and supporters for so long. And all the things that she listed we would not have done without them. So we are grateful for them.

We've got a number of Members of Congress here who I just want to acknowledge, because part of what we're here about tonight is, democracy doesn't function unless we've got Members of Congress who are serious about their jobs. It doesn't matter who's in the White House if we don't have the kind of hard work and dedication that these Members display. So I just want to acknowledge them real quick. Xavier Becerra. Karen Bass. Where's Karen? Ted Lieu. Brad Sherman. The DCCC chair, Ben Ray Luján. And my copartner in everything good that we've been able to accomplish—if something didn't work, it was my mistake. [*Laughter*] Whatever did work, it was because of the outstanding work of Nancy Pelosi. So we're grateful to her.

You guys have been in these before. I'm not going to give a long speech. I actually was—I conducted a class today. I was back in my old haunts in Chicago. I've been accused of being professorial sometimes—[*laughter*]—so I just decided, you know what, I'm just going to roll with this. And I had a bunch of law students, and they're used to it, and it was fine. [*Laughter*] And we talked about Merrick Garland and the vacancy that currently exists in the Supreme Court.

And no one disputes Mr. Garland's credentials. Uniformly, Democrats, Republicans, jurists, lawyers, editorial boards—they all acknowledge that rarely has there been somebody this well-qualified to send to the Supreme Court. And yet what we've seen out of the Republicans in the Senate is not simply a refusal to confirm him thus far, but a refusal to meet with him or to have a hearing or to have a vote. And the point that I made to these sharp young law students—who, by the way, were all wearing suits and ties. And I said, this is not how you go to class. [*Laughter*] I taught here. You can't fool me.

Audience member. This isn't how we go——

The President. That's what I figured. Right. But what I told them was, that setting aside whatever political predispositions you may have, our democracy only works if there's a respect and appreciation of the process of self-governance; that there's a belief that we can be principled and passionate about the issues that we care about, but we also have an obligation to make sure that this incredible experiment in self-governance continues. And that requires an adherence to facts and science. It requires a sense of compromise. It requires a realization that the institutions that the Founders set up only work effectively if people bring some measure of good will and appreciation that we're not just always thinking about the next election, but we're thinking about the next generation.

And I made the argument—which I deeply believe—that if in fact the Senate refuses to even give a hearing to Mr. Garland, that the basic compact that we have in a big, diverse country like this, our ability to cooperate and find the solutions to the big challenges that we face will deteriorate to such a point where it's going to be very difficult for anybody—and any President—to do what it needs to do.

And this is just one example of the challenges that we've been facing for a while now. Most of us aren't born partisan. I mean, Nancy—maybe. [*Laughter*] But most of us at the age of 2 or 3, we're not thinking blue and red. And so I believe in an honest debate, and I don't believe that Democrats have a monopoly on wisdom. And I think that the country benefits from a strong two-party system. And during the course of my Presidency, one of the things I desperately sought is a loyal opposition that could challenge me and to point out my blind

spots and engage in a back and forth so that I could make better decisions and we could move the country forward more effectively.

But that's not what we've had. And I've said this before: It's not as if Democrats don't think about politics. This is a business in which we're trying to get people elected. And we have a point of view. And we care about making sure that we're dealing with climate change. And we believe in immigration reform. And we want every child in America to get a decent education. And we believe that the economy works best when everybody gets a shot. And we are passionate about equal rights and that every American is deserving of dignity, regardless of race and gender and sexual orientation. We believe in these things deeply. We believe in them strongly. But we're also politicians. We care about getting elected. And we recognize that there are times in a big democracy like this that we've got to compromise.

But in each instance—and I can say this about Nancy Pelosi, and I can say this about every Member of Congress who's here—when we've had to get something done on behalf of the country as a whole, when something really counts, when it's really important, even if it's not politically convenient but we've been willing to do that, these folks have taken tough votes that were contrary to their political interests and, in some cases, contrary to what their most ardent supporters want, because we understood we had a certain responsibility to get things done.

And that's what we have not seen from the other side. And that's why this election is so important. And I recognize that there is a deep obsession right now about Mr. Trump. And one of you pulled me aside and squeezed me hard and said, tell me that Mr. Trump is not succeeding you. And I said, Mr. Trump is not succeeding me. [*Laughter*] But what I also said was, Mr. Trump has actually done a service, as Mr. Cruz is doing a service. And that is, laying bare unvarnished some of the nonsense that we've been dealing with in Congress on a daily basis. People act as if these folks are outliers. But they're not. Listen to talk radio, watch their interviews. Look at how they operate in town halls. They're saying stuff that's just as wacky as what we're hearing out of the Presidential candidates. It's just nobody was paying attention. And so we should thank Mr. Trump and Mr. Cruz for just being honest. This is how we're thinking these days—we're not thinking these days.

But it gives you a sense of what's at stake in this election. I mean, I can give you a long list of particulars about any issue under the Sun and why the positions we take are sound and will help move America in a better direction, and the positions that they take will take us backwards. That's not hard to do. But what I'm suggesting is it's more than that. What's at stake right now is how our democracy functions. What's at stake right now is do we make sure that the highest offices in the land, the people who represent us and who are shaping the future for our kids and our grandkids and children after then, that they act responsibly; that they don't consider compromise a dirty word; that they listen to what people who disagree with them have to say; that they're respectful of those who are not like them; that they care about what is happening beyond our borders, and recognize that ultimately our well-being and our children's well-being and our grandchildren's well-being is tied up with what's happening to some kid in Guatemala or some child in sub-Saharan Africa.

And so I'll just close with this, and then I'll be happy to take some questions. There are times where, as devoted as all of you are, when I'm traveling through Democratic circles I see: "Oh, Mr. President, we love you so, and we're going to miss you so. And sometimes, I'm not that excited about this election." And I say, I have no patience for that. I say thank you very much, first. [*Laughter*] But then I say to folks, we cannot be complacent, and we cannot be cynical, because the stakes are too high. And we should take pride in what we've accomplished over the last 7½ years, not because every problem was fixed, but because it showed the steady progress that happens when people who love this country decide to change it. And that should be a spur, a call to action. And it starts not just at the Presidential level, but in us

recognizing the enormous power of Congress and the difference between a Nancy Pelosi being Speaker of the House and a Paul Ryan being Speaker of the House.

So I hope all of you are fired up and ready to go, because I am. I'm not on the ballot. I'm just fine with that. [*Laughter*] But I've said this before—quoting Louis Brandeis, I believe—the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. And even if I'm not President, and contrary to the assertions of some, I will continue to be a citizen. [*Laughter*] And I care deeply about what happens next. So let's get going. Let's get to work.

Thank you, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:13 p.m. at the residence of Cindy and Alan Horn. In his remarks, he referred to Donald J. Trump, chairman and chief executive officer, Trump Organization, and Sen. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz, in their capacity as Republican Presidential candidates. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner in San Francisco, California

April 8, 2016

Thank you, everybody. Well, it is so good to see all of you.

I will begin where Nancy began, and that is just thanking Ann and Gordon for their incredible hospitality. They have been great friends to a lot of causes and a lot of civic efforts, but they've been great friends to me, personally. And in some ways, I almost feel like I'm coming full circle here because the first time I was here I had no gray hair—[*laughter*]—and I was just beginning what would end up being this remarkable journey of ours, and it was by no means clear how it would turn out. But they were early friends and supporters and have been with me through thick and thin. And I'm so proud of them and so thankful for everything they have done. So give them one more round of applause.

Of course, the reason we're here is because we think a Democratic Congress is good for America. And if you need some evidence of that, then you can look at the Members who are here—Jared, Anna, Barbara—bringing passion and dedication and common sense and hard work to the business of making sure every kid in this country gets a decent education, and that we're protecting our planet from the ravages of climate change and making sure that our international relations are based on firmness and toughness and an outstanding military, but also a generosity of spirit and a willingness to engage former adversaries.

I've done a lot of tough stuff since I've been President. I couldn't do it unless I had outstanding legislators who had my back, even when it wasn't politically convenient. And these three are just a sampling of the great folks that we've got in Congress. And so please give them a big round of applause. I'm thankful to them.

And then, at the risk of being a member of the mutual admiration society, I love me some Nancy Pelosi. I was with some folks last night; we had done an event down in L.A., and afterwards I'm talking to some friends and supporters. And they were extolling Nancy's virtues, and they were explaining how, oh, and she is just so intelligent and so passionate, and she cares about all these issues, and so full of integrity, I don't know how she gets it all done. And I said, all those things are true, but she also is at daughter of a former Baltimore mayor. [*Laughter*] So don't let the whole Northern California, cappuccino-sipping thing fool you. [*Laughter*] And that combination of idealism and just tough-as-nails conviction and savvy is the reason why this country has made such enormous strides over these last 7 years. I could not have had a better partner than Nancy Pelosi. And I mean that. It's true.

And Paul is all right also. [*Laughter*] He's okay. He's all right. He's all right. He's a genial sidekick. [*Laughter*] Since I'm on the subject, I have never seen—and I'm sure others have—but I've never seen this man in a bad mood or anything other than gracious and generous to people. And that's a pretty remarkable thing. So a man of great character who I really have come to love. I mean that.

All right. We've got some work to do. I was at the University of Chicago yesterday. As I think some of the Fourth Estate remarked—they've said in the past that I'm professorial, and so I just let 'er rip. I said, you know what, I'm just going to go with it. [*Laughter*] I'm going to go back to my roots—and was in an auditorium with law students and law professors. And the subject was the Supreme Court. As you know, we have a vacancy currently. And I have nominated an individual who no one disputes is one of the most qualified people ever to be nominated to the Supreme Court—currently, Chief Justice of the DC Circuit, often considered the second most important court in the land after the Supreme Court.

Democrats and Republicans alike in the past have extolled his temperament, his intellect, his consensus-building. He was confirmed all but unanimously when he ascended to his current position. Chief Justice Roberts has said good things about him. And yet we have a Republican Senate that has decided not only not to vote for him, but to not give the American people an opportunity to hear what he has to say through a hearing—or, for that matter, even meet with him. At least that was their original position.

And I used the occasion at the University of Chicago to explain that, setting aside the merits of Judge Garland, setting aside the fact that he led the investigation in the Oklahoma City bombing, by all accounts in a way that ensured justice was done, that upheld rule of law, but also the memory of the victims there, despite his clear integrity and blemishless record—even setting all that aside, the notion that our democracy could support, our Constitution would suggest—that one party would simply say, we're not going to do our jobs because we're going to see how the election turns out to then see whether or not we should fill a vacancy in the highest court in the land gives you a sense of what's at stake in this election.

Because it's not just about cases and controversies that may come before the Court. It's not just about the particulars of immigration or a woman's reproductive freedom or voting rights. It's about, can our democracy work? Because the Founders anticipated that this was going to be a big, unruly place, with a lot of different points of view and a lot of people, and their whole goal was to set up a system whereby we could disagree, but maintain civil discourse and order, and that the marketplace of ideas would work and reason and fact and argument would win the day, and you'd win some arguments and you'd lose some arguments, but you'd stay true to the process. And in that fashion, self-government could work.

It was a big experiment, a big risk. It really hadn't been tried in the way that they imagined it and the way it unfolded over two centuries. And if you have a party that decides we're going to break that because it is not expedient at this moment, then what you've lost is more than just the possibilities of an excellent candidate being on the Supreme Court. What you've lost is the possibility that we can keep going within a set of boundaries and a framework of rules that allow us—in all of our diversity and all of our differences and all of our regional and economic and racial and religious diversity—to continue to be the greatest nation on Earth.

Now, that's the Senate. Things are even more messed up in the House. And I said when I was in L.A. yesterday, and initially, people were surprised—I said that I actually think that Donald Trump and Ted Cruz have done us a favor. People said, well, how so? This notion that Donald Trump or Ted Cruz are outliers and that now suddenly the Republican establishment wants to—they're embarrassed by them. Why? They're saying the same things that these members of the Freedom Caucus in the House have been saying for years. In fact, that's where Trump got it. He said he'd been listening apparently to their positions on immi-

gration and their views with respect to national security and their views on slashing taxes for the wealthiest among us and slashing Medicaid and changing Medicare. And he'd been paying attention, and he said, you know what, I can deliver this message with more flair—[*laughter*]—with more panache.

And the reason I actually think that they've done us a favor is because it has stripped away any veneer of responsible governance from what had been the central tenets of an awful lot of Republicans in both the House and the Senate during the course of my Presidency and before that.

Now, that is different from saying that all Republicans agree with him. I think there is a substantial number of Republicans out there who are embarrassed by it. It's just that they hadn't been hearing what was being said on talk radio and Fox News and blogs and so forth. And so now there's a little bit of recoil. Is that what we're standing for? Blocking Muslims from coming into our country? Building walls? Surveilling neighborhoods?

So it's a useful time for us to examine what do we stand for, what do we believe, what do the parties represent. And the good news is, I know what we represent. There's a difference in emphasis between the two fine Democrats who are running for the Presidency. There are tactical differences in the assessment of how change comes about, but they both believe that climate change is real and we should do something about it. They both believe we should invest in early childhood education to give every child a chance. They both believe that we should raise the minimum wage. They both believe that we should close corporate loopholes and prevent the kind of tax avoidance that puts a burden on middle class families. They both believe that we should do something to make college more affordable. They both believe that we are a nation of immigrants and that we should pass laws that are reflective of those traditions. They both believe that women should be paid the same as men for doing the same job and that we should have family-supportive policies like affordable childcare and sick leave and family leave that can actually be used. They both believe that people should be treated with dignity and respect and full citizenship, regardless of race or religion or sexual orientation.

There's not this big ideological divide among Democrats. We largely agree on what we stand for. And the good news is that the majority of Americans agree with us. Now, that doesn't mean that we can be complacent. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't be self-critical. It doesn't mean we have a monopoly on wisdom. As Nancy pointed out, one of the great virtues of the Democratic Party is that it is big and encompasses a lot of different kinds of folks, and we are inherently argumentative and opinionated and self-critical. That's good. It's healthy. It can be aggravating, if you're President of the United States or the leader of the Democratic Caucus. But it's good. It's healthy.

And I've said before, in ways that sometimes have gotten me in trouble with my fellow Democrats, that there are some Republican ideas—or that used to be Republican ideas until I started extolling them—[*laughter*]—that actually are useful. I believe in market economies. I believe in competition. I believe in entrepreneurship. I believe in making sure that regulations aren't—that we're not regulating just for the sake of regulating, but we're doing it in a way that doesn't impede growth. I want a Republican Party that is rational and well-functioning. I think that's good for our democracy.

But that's not what we have right now. And that's why this election is so important. Because if we are successful, not only can we advance the causes that so many of you have fought for and devoted your time and effort and energy and money to, not only do we have a chance to pass immigration reform and pass early childhood education and rebuild our infrastructure and invest in science and research and development that has been at the heart of the dynamism in our economy—not only do we have a chance to do all those things, but I actually genuinely believe it gives an opportunity for Republicans to step back and reflect on where it is that they're going.

But that means there's an awful lot at stake in this election. And I want to make sure that

everybody here feels the same sense of urgency I do. In 10 months, I will no longer be President of the United States. But in 10 months, I will—contrary to Mr. Trump's opinion—still be a citizen of the United States. [*Laughter*] And I've said this before, quoting Justice Brandeis: The most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen.

You have all been extraordinary citizens. But the things about citizenship is it's not sporadic. You don't just do it some of the time. You don't just do it when you're particularly inspired. It is a duty and a responsibility to future generations. And I would ask that you join me and Nancy and these outstanding Members of Congress over the next 10 months to make sure that we are fulfilling our responsibilities as citizens and make sure we get a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate and a Democratic President.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:29 p.m. at the residence of Ann and Gordon Getty. In his remarks, he referred to Reps. Jared W. Huffman, Anna G. Eshoo, and Barbara J. Lee; Paul F. Pelosi, Sr., husband of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi; and Donald J. Trump, chairman and chief executive officer, Trump Organization, and Sen. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz, in their capacity as Republican Presidential candidates. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
April 9, 2016

Hi, everybody. Over the past 7 years, we haven't just been recovering from crisis, we've been rebuilding our economy on a new foundation for growth, growth that benefits everybody, not just folks at the top. Our businesses have created jobs for 73 straight months, 14.4 million new jobs in all. We've covered another 20 million Americans with health insurance. We've helped more Americans afford college and invested in industries that create good jobs that pay well, like clean energy. And wages are finally rising again.

But there will always be more work to do. And this week, my administration took two big steps that will help make sure your hard work is rewarded and that everybody plays by the same rules.

First, we're helping more Americans retire with security and dignity. Right now if you go to a retirement adviser for investment advice, some of them don't have to act in your best interest. Instead of telling you the best way to save your hard-earned money, these advisers can get backdoor payments from big companies for steering you toward investments that cost more and earn you less. As a result, when you retire, you might be missing out on tens of thousands of dollars because your adviser got paid more to give you bad advice.

If that seems wrong, that's because it is. And that's why the Department of Labor just finalized a rule to crack down on these kind of conflicts of interest. And a lot of Wall Street special interests aren't very happy about it. But across the country, this new rule will boost working folks' retirement savings by billions of dollars a year. And it will level the playing field for the many good advisers who do work in their clients' best interest.

Second, the Treasury Department took action to crack down on big corporations that change their address overseas after acquiring smaller companies, in order to reduce their tax bill here at home. It's a loophole called corporate inversion. And it means that American companies can take advantage of American technology, America's infrastructure, America's workers, but then, when it comes to paying their fair share of taxes, suddenly claim they're not American companies after all. That's why, this week, the Treasury Department made it more difficult for companies to exploit this loophole and stick the rest of us with the tab.

Together, these steps build on the work we've already done to make our Tax Code fair-

er and consumer protections stronger. Because I believe that rather than double down on policies that allow a few at the top to play by their own rules, we should build an economy where everybody has a fair shot, everybody does their fair share, and everybody plays by the same set of rules.

That's what this country is all about. That's what we've been working toward these past seven years. And that's what I'm going to keep fighting for as long as I'm your President.

Thanks, everybody. And have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:55 p.m. on April 8 in the Sutter Room at the InterContinental San Francisco hotel for broadcast on April 9. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 8, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 9. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the California Legislature's Passage of Legislation Expanding California's Paid Family Leave
April 11, 2016

I applaud the California State Legislature and Governor Jerry Brown for expanding paid family leave in their State today. This action means more hard-working Californians will have the peace of mind to know that they can take care of a new child or a sick family member. This is great news for California. Yet millions of Americans still don't have access to any form of paid leave. Congress needs to catch up to California—and to countries all over the world—by acting to guarantee paid family leave to all Americans. As long as I am President, I will continue to do everything I can to ensure that working Americans have access to this basic security.

Remarks on the Establishment of the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument
April 12, 2016

Thank you. Everybody, please, have a seat. Have a seat. Well, hello, everybody. Thank you to Chitra for the introduction. It should be noted that today is Equal Pay Day, which means a woman has to work about this far into 2016 just to earn what a man earned in 2015. And what better place to commemorate this day than here at this house, where some of our country's most important history took place and where this history needs to inform the work that remains to be done.

I want to thank some of the leaders who've worked to keep the house standing. We've got Members of Congress like Senator Barbara Mikulski, who's fought to preserve this site for years and has been the longest serving woman in the United States Senate. We are so proud of her. Our Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell, and her team, as we celebrate the 100th birthday of the National Park Service this year.

One of our greatest athletes of all time, one of the earliest advocates for equal pay for professional female athletes, and a heroine of mine when I was still young and fancied myself a tennis player—[*laughter*]—Billie Jean King is in the house. And the National Woman's Party Board of Directors, Page Harrington, and the Executive Director of the House and the Museum. Over the years, Page and her staff have built a community and cared for this house, repairing every cracked pipe and patching every leaked roof. [*Laughter*] We are grateful for their stewardship. I know it was not easy.

Equal pay for equal work should be a fundamental principle of our economy. It's the idea that whether you're a high school teacher, a

business executive, or a professional soccer player or tennis player, your work should be equally valued and rewarded, whether you are a man or a woman.

It's a simple ideal. It's a simple principle. It's one that our leader of the Democratic Caucus in the House, Nancy Pelosi, has been fighting for for years. But it's one where we still fall short. Today, the typical woman who works full time earns 79 cents for every dollar that a typical man makes. And the gap is even wider for women of color. The typical Black woman makes only 60 cents, a Latino woman 55 cents for every dollar that a White man earns. Now, if we truly value fairness, then America should be a level playing field where everyone who works hard gets a chance to succeed. And that's good for America, because we don't want some of our best players on the sidelines.

That's why the first bill that I signed as President was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. Earlier this year, on the anniversary of that day, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Department of Labor acted to begin collecting annual data on pay by gender, race, and ethnicity. And this action will strengthen the enforcement of equal pay laws that are already on the books and help employers address pay gaps on their own.

And to build on these efforts, Congress needs to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act to put sensible rules in place and make sure and make sure that employees who discuss their salaries don't face retaliation by their employers.

But I'm not here just to say we should close the wage gap. I'm here to say we will close the wage gap. And if you don't believe me, then—[*applause*]—if you don't believe that we're going to close our wage gap, you need to come visit this house, because this house has a story to tell.

This is the story of the National Women's Party, whose members fought to have their voices heard. These women first organized in 1912, with little money but big hopes for equality for women all around the world. And they wanted an equal say over their children, over their property, their earnings, their inheritance; equal rights to their citizenship and a say in their government; equal opportunities in schools, in universities, workplaces, public service; and yes, equal pay for equal work. And they understood that the power of their voice in our democracy was the first step in achieving these broader goals.

Their leader, Alice Paul, was a brilliant community organizer and political strategist, and she recruited women and men from across the country to join their cause. And they began picketing 7 days a week in front of the White House to demand their right to vote. They were mocked. They were derided. They were arrested. They were beaten. There were force-feedings during hunger strikes. And through all this, women, young and old, kept marching for suffrage, kept protesting for suffrage.

And in 1920, they won that right. We ratified the 19th Amendment. But the suffragists didn't stop there. They moved into this historic house, and they continued their work. From these rooms, steps away from the Capitol, they drafted speeches and letters and legislation. They pushed Congress and fought for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. They advocated for the inclusion of women in the U.N. Charter and the 1964 Civil Rights Act. They campaigned for women who were running for Congress.

And this house became a hotbed of activism, a centerpiece for the struggle for equality, a monument to a fight not just for women's equality, but ultimately, for equality for everybody. Because one of the things we've learned is, is that the effort to make sure that everybody is treated fairly is connected.

And so today I am very proud to designate it as America's newest national monument, the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument, right here in Washington, DC. And we do this to help tell the story of these suffragists. In these rooms, they pursued ideals which shouldn't be relegated to the archives of history, shouldn't be behind glass cases, because the story of their fighting is our story. I want young girls and boys to come here, 10, 20, 100 years from now, to know that women fought for equality; it was not just given to them. I want them to come here and be aston-

ished that there was ever a time when women could not vote. I want them to be astonished that there was ever a time when women earned less than men for doing the same work. I want them to be astonished that there was ever a time when women were vastly outnumbered in the boardroom or in Congress, that there was ever a time when a woman had never sat in the Oval Office.

Now, I don't know how long it will take to get there, but I know we're getting closer to that day, because of the work of generations of active, committed citizens. One of the interesting things, as I was just looking through some of the rooms—there was Susan B. Anthony's desk. [*Laughter*] You had Elizabeth Cady Stanton's chair. And you realize that those early suffragists had preceded Alice Paul by a generation. They had passed away by the time that the vote was finally granted to women. And it makes you realize—and I say this to young people all the time—that this is not a sprint, this is a marathon. It's not the actions of one person, one individual, but it is a collective effort, where each generation has its own duty, its own responsibility, its own role to fulfill in advancing the cause of our democracy.

That's why we're getting closer, because I know there's a whole new generation of women and men who believe so deeply that we've got to close these gaps. I have faith because what this house shows us is that the story of America is a story of progress. And it will continue to be a story of progress as long as people are willing to keep pushing and keep organizing and, yes, keep voting for people committed to this cause and to full equality for every American.

And so I'm hoping that a young generation will come here and draw inspiration from the efforts of people who came before them. After women won the right to vote, Alice Paul, who lived most of her life in this very house, said, "It is incredible to me that any woman should consider the right for full equality won. It has just begun." And that's the thing about America: We are never finished. We are a constant work in progress. And our future belongs to every free woman and man who takes up the hard work of citizenship to win full equality and shape our own destiny.

That is the story that this house tells. It is now a national monument that young people will be inspired by for years to come. It would not have happened without the extraordinary efforts of many of the people in this room, not only their active support of this house and preserving it, but also the outstanding example that they are setting, that you are setting.

I'm very proud of you. Congratulations. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Chitra Panjabi, vice president of membership, National Organization for Women; and former professional tennis player Billie Jean King, founder, Billie Jean King Leadership Initiative. Proclamation 9423, which established the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument, was signed on April 12 and is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the White House Science Fair
April 13, 2016

The President. Hello, hello, hello! Hey! Good to see you. All right, everybody, have a seat, have a seat.

Well, hello, everybody. Welcome to the White House. There are a lot of good things about being President. I get a chance to travel all across the country and meet people and see all the amazing things that are being done; being Commander in Chief of the greatest military the world has ever known and seeing the incredible service of our men and women in uniform. Air Force One is very cool. [*Laughter*] I don't have to take off my shoes before I get on an airplane. [*Laughter*]

But some of the best moments that I've had as President have involved science and our annual Science Fair. I mean, I have shot a marshmallow out of a cannon directly under

Lincoln's portrait. [*Laughter*] I have learned about prototypes from 6-year-old Girl Scouts who built a page-turning machine out of Legos for people who might be disabled—there they are. [*Laughter*] Good to see you guys. [*Laughter*] I should add, by the way, that I took a picture with them with one of their tiaras on, which I think is still floating around the Internet. [*Laughter*]

Most importantly, I've just been able to see the unbelievable ingenuity and passion and curiosity and brain power of America's next generation and all the cool things that they do. I've also, by the way, had a chance to see an alarming number of robots. [*Laughter*] None have caused me any harm up until now. They've startled me a little bit. I understand today that we have a live chicken here, which I'm sure the White House staff is thrilled about. [*Laughter*] But this is fun. More importantly, it speaks to what makes America the greatest country on Earth.

I want to publicly thank some of the people who helped make today possible, also because I want you to know who to blame if something explodes. [*Laughter*] We've got some Members of Congress in the house who have been highly supportive of all our science and basic research efforts. We've got my science adviser, John Holdren, who is here. Give John a big round of applause. We've got my Chief Technology Officer Megan Smith in the house.

We have some guests who are really helping to lift up the importance of science, like—this is not a typical combination—supermodel and supercoder Karlie Kloss is here. We've got actress and science enthusiast Yara Shahidi. Where's—there she is. Good to see you. We've got XKCD comic creator Randall Munroe is here. Give him a big round of applause. We're joined by some of the past participants of our Science Fairs, including Elana Simon, who studied her own cancer and started coming up with some cures. I remember meeting you last year. How is Harvard going?

Harvard University student Elana Simon. It's good.

The President. So far, so good? She was a senior last year, just started.

So this is an eclectic and diverse bunch. But what they all share is this love of science and love of technology and a belief that our youngest innovators can change the world.

And there's nothing that makes me more hopeful about the future than seeing young people like the ones who are here. And they come from all over the country; they come in all shapes and sizes. All of you are showing the rest of us that it's never too early in life to make a difference. You teach us about the power of reason and logic and trying things and figuring out whether they work and, if they don't, learning from that and trying something new. And you remind us that, together, through science, we can tackle some of the biggest challenges that we face.

Whether you're fighting cancer or combating climate change, feeding the world, writing code that leads to social change, you are sharing in this essential spirit of discovery that America is built on.

John Holdren helpfully reminded me that today happens to be the 273d birthday of Thomas Jefferson. [*Laughter*] And Thomas Jefferson was obviously a pretty good writer; the Declaration of Independence turned out pretty well. [*Laughter*] He was a great political thinker and a great President. But he was also a scientist. And that was true of most of our Founders. They were children of the Enlightenment. They had come of age when all the old dogmas were being challenged. And they had this incredible faith, this belief in the human mind and our ability to figure stuff out.

And whether it was Benjamin Franklin or Thomas Jefferson or all the others who were involved in the founding of our country, one of the essential elements that is embedded in our Constitution and the design of this democracy is this belief that the power of the human brain when applied to the world around us can do amazing, remarkable things.

And it also requires, as we're seeing from these outstanding teams, not just constant inquiry, but also strong teamwork and dogged perseverance. And by following the trail of your curiosity wherever it takes you, you are continually adding to this body of knowledge

that helps make us a more secure, more prosperous, and more hopeful society. Science has always been the hallmark of American progress. It's the key to our economic success. I can't think of a more exciting time for American science than right now, because we are busy reigniting that spirit of innovation to meet so many challenges.

Just to give you a couple examples, we're on the cusp of a new era of medicine that accounts for people's individual genes. And I've been doing a lot of work with Francis Collins, the head of NIH, around how we take the human genome that we've mapped, in part thanks to the good work of Francis and others, so that we are able to not just cure diseases generally, but figure out what exactly do you in your particular body need in order to keep it running well.

We're harnessing technology to develop cleaner sources of energy and save our planet in the process. We're unraveling the mysteries of the human brain, unlocking secrets of the universe. In fact, just last month, Commander Scott Kelly returned from an almost a yearlong stay on the International Space Station. Some of you may have read about that. He conducted countless experiments, and he also served as an experiment himself. His identical twin brother Mark, who is an astronaut as well—Mark stayed home during this entire time that Scott was up in the air, and that meant that NASA could study the two of them side by side to gain insights into how a long-term occupation in space changes your body and your operating systems.

It turned out, initially, it makes you 2 inches taller. [*Laughter*] But I saw Mark just 2 weekends ago; apparently, you shrink back really quickly. [*Laughter*] It makes your head bigger too, which—[*laughter*]—but I don't know how big.

America has also got a selfie-taking rover that's Instagramming from Mars. The International Space Station just got its first inflatable habitat for astronauts. SpaceX, on the commercial, private venture side of space, just landed a returning rocket on a drone ship in the middle of the ocean. And that's opening up the possibility of reusing our rockets instead of just throwing them away once they have launched.

So the progress we're seeing across the board is extraordinary, and it's just the beginning. The rest is going to be up to you, the next generation. Somewhere in your generation, maybe in this room, are pioneers who are going to be the first to set their foot on Mars—the first humans, anyway. I don't know about other life forms. [*Laughter*]

And I know what you're capable of because I just had a chance to see some of the exhibits, and we had some of the press pool follow. If you were not blown away from some of the young people that we just had a chance to meet, then you had too big of a lunch and you were falling asleep, because if you were paying attention, it was unbelievable.

We've got Maya Varma, who is a senior from San Jose, California. Where is Maya? Yay, there's Maya. Maya is using a low-cost microcontroller, software freely available on the Internet, and a smartphone, and she designed a tool that allows people with asthma and other lung diseases to diagnose and monitor their own symptoms. So her goal was to use smartphone technology to make diagnostic tests for all kinds of diseases a lot cheaper. "My aspiration is not only to create the next big thing in my field one day," Maya says, "but also to make it accessible to more than a privileged few in the world." So give Maya a big round of applause.

I do have to say—this is just an aside—the only problem with the Science Fair is it makes me feel a little inadequate. [*Laughter*] Because I think back to my high school, and first of all, I didn't have a field. Maya talked about her "field." My field—I don't know exactly what my field of study was at that time, but it wasn't that. [*Laughter*]

We also have 9-year-old Jacob Leggette from Baltimore. Where is Jacob? There you go, in the bowtie. So Jacob loved programming ever since the age of 2, when he nearly wiped clean his grandma's computer—[*laughter*]—which I'm sure she was thrilled with. But don't worry, Jacob fixed it. Last summer, this young maker wrote to a company that manufactures

3–D printers, asked them if he could have one of the 3–D printers in exchange for feedback on whether their printers are kid friendly. So, clearly, he's a good negotiator and businessperson. [*Laughter*] And today, Jacob is churning out toys and games for himself and his little sister, and he dreams one day of making artificial organs for people.

I should add, by the way, Jacob, John, had a very good idea, which is that we should have—in addition to our PCAST, which is my science advisory group, all these scientists and leaders in various fields, we should have a kid's advisory group that starts explaining to us what's interesting to them and what's working and could help us shape advances in STEM education. Anyway, that was Jacob's idea. [*Laughter*] So way to go, Jacob. We're going to follow up on that. Give Jacob a round of applause.

We have 16-year-old Anarudh Ganesan. Where is Anarudh? There he is, right there. So when Anarudh was little, his grandparents walked him 10 miles to a remote clinic in his native India for vaccinations, only to find out that the vaccines had spoiled in the heat. Though he eventually got the shots that he needed, he thought, well, this is a problem, and wanted to prevent other children from facing the same risk. So he developed what he calls the VAXXWAGON, and it's a refrigerator on wheels that transports vaccines to remote destinations. That's the kind of innovation and compassion that we're seeing from so many of these young people. So give Anarudh a big round of applause.

And we have Olivia Hallisey, a high school senior from Greenwich, Connecticut. Where is Olivia? There she is. Hi, Olivia. And, now, think about this. So Olivia swept the Google Science Fair. She read about the Ebola epidemic in the news. She decides, I want to make a faster, less expensive test for the disease, as opposed to a lot of adults who were just thinking, how do I avoid getting Ebola? [*Laughter*] She decides, well, I'm going to fix this. So she wants a faster, less expensive test. An old test cost $1,000, took up to 12 hours to conduct. Using silk as a base instead, Olivia made the test cost $5, without requiring refrigeration, with results that are available in under 30 minutes. How about, what were you doing in high school? [*Laughter*] Give Olivia a big round of applause.

So this is just a small sample of the incredible talent that is on display at this Science Fair. And we couldn't be prouder. To all the students, to all the young people: We could not be prouder of you. I want to thank the parents and the teachers and mentors who stood behind these young people, encouraged them to pursue their dreams. I asked all the young people who I had a chance to meet, how did you get interested in this? And there were a couple whose parents were in the sciences, but for the majority of them, there was a teacher, a mentor, a program, something that just got them hooked. And it's a reminder that science is not something that is out of reach, it's not just for the few, it's for the many, as long as it's something that we're weaving into our curriculum and it's something that we're valuing as a society.

And so I hope that every company and every college and every community and every parent and every teacher joins us in encouraging this next generation of students to actively engage and pursue science and push the boundaries of what's possible. We've got to give all of our young people the tools that they need to explore and discover and to dig their hands in stuff and experiment and invent and uncover something new and try things and see hypotheses or experiments fail and then learn how to extract some knowledge from things that didn't work as well as things that worked. That's another theme that came out of a lot of the conversations I had with young people.

And that's why we're building on our efforts to bring hands-on computer science learning, for example, to all students. As I've said before, in the new economy, computer science isn't optional, it's a basic skill, along with the three R's. So we're issuing new guidance to school districts for how they can better support computer science education. Oracle will invest in getting 125,000 more students into computer science classes. Give Oracle a big round of applause for that. We appreciate that.

We've got more than 500 schools that are committing to expand access to computer science. And this is just a sample of the things that we've been putting together over the last several years to try to expand opportunity for the kind of brilliant work that's being done by these students. And we're seeing entire States take action. For example, last month, Rhode Island got on a path to bring computer science to every school within 2 years.

So we're going to build on this progress. We want to make sure every single one of our students—no matter where they're from, what income their parents bring in, regardless of their backgrounds—we want to make sure that they've got access to hands-on science, technology, engineering, and math education, that it's going to set them up for success and keep our Nation competitive in the 21st century.

That includes, by the way, working through some of the structural biases that exist in science. Some of them, they're—a lot of them are unconscious. But the fact is, is that we've got to get more of our young women and minorities into science and technology, engineering and math, and computer science. I've been really pleased to see the number of young women who have gotten more and more involved in our Science Fairs over the course of these last several years.

And as I said to a group that I had a chance to meet with outside, we're not going to succeed if we've got half the team on the bench, especially when it's the smarter half of the team. [*Laughter*] Our diversity is a strength. And we've got to leverage all of our talent in order to make ourselves as creative and solve as many problems as we can be.

And one of the things I find so inspiring about these young thinkers and makers is that they look at all these seemingly intractable problems as something that we can solve. There is a confidence when you are pursuing science. They don't consider age a barrier. They don't think, well, that's just the way things are. They're not afraid to try things and ask tough questions. And above all, what we've seen today is that they feel an obligation to use their gifts to do something not just for themselves, but for other people as well.

Olivia said after she was working on this Ebola diagnostic tool: "My generation has been raised with an awareness that we're part of a global community. It's everybody's responsibility to take a proactive approach and think of solutions." She is right. I want you to call up Congress and tell them your thinking on that. [*Laughter*] That was just a joke. [*Laughter*] Maybe not. [*Laughter*] But it's all up to us to work together with the—our youngest talent leading the way.

A century ago, Albert Einstein predicted the existence of gravitational waves. This year, a team of scientists finally proved him right. This was very cool, by the way. I don't know if—those of you guys who had a chance to read about this—the way they measured it was the building got a little longer. [*Laughter*] The building that—from which they were measuring this gravitational wave grew, like, a little bit. [*Laughter*] And then, it kind of shrank back, which is really weird and really interesting. [*Laughter*]

And that's the thing about science: You don't always cross the finish line yourself. You may have a hypothesis, a theory, and then people build off of it, and it's like you're running a race and you're passing a baton. Everything that we're working with today is based on some young person like you 10 years ago, 50 years ago, 100 or 300 years ago, who were asking themselves the same question. And while even Einstein didn't see all the fruits of his labor, because he went as far as his curiosity and hard work would take him, generations of scientists continue to build on his progress.

So that's what we're going to need from all of you. We are counting on all of you to help build a brighter future and for you to use your talents to help your communities and your country and the world. We will be with you every step of the way. And I will be keenly following your progress so that when you invent some cancer cure or find some new source of cheap, clean energy, I will take some of the credit. [*Laughter*] I'll say, if it hadn't been for the White House Science Fair, who knows

what might have happened? Even though it won't really be my credit to take. So I'm just teasing, guys.

Thank you very much, everybody. Proud of you. Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:04 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Emily Bergenroth, Alicia Cutter, Karissa Cheng, Addy Oneal, and Emery Dodson, members, Daisy Girl Scout Troop 411 in Tulsa, OK; Maya Varma, student, Presentation High School in San Jose, CA; Jacob Leggette, student, Digital Harbor Foundation's Mini Makers program; Anarudh Ganesan, student, Clarksburg High School in Clarksburg, MD; and Olivia Hallisey, student, Greenwich High School in Greenwich, CT.

Remarks on United States Strategy To Counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization at the Central Intelligence Agency in Langley, Virginia

April 13, 2016

Good evening, everybody. As President and Commander in Chief, my top priority, above all else, is the security of the United States and the safety of the American people. And that means preventing terrorist attacks, and at the moment, it is focused on making sure that we are dismantling and destroying the ISIL network. I just met with my National Security Council as part of our regular effort to review and constantly intensify our campaign against ISIL. And I want to thank Director Brennan and everybody here at the Central Intelligence Agency for hosting us and for their critical contributions to this fight.

In late February, at our meeting at the State Department, I directed my team to continue accelerating this campaign on all fronts. And we have. This remains a difficult fight and a complex one, involving many countries and different communities in Syria and in Iraq. It is a military campaign, but it—and a counterterrorism effort, but it also depends on a whole range of political issues that face these two countries.

As we've seen so tragically—from Brussels to Istanbul to Iraq, where ISIL slaughtered children watching soccer—these depraved terrorists still have the ability to inflict horrific violence on the innocent, to the revulsion of the entire world. With attacks likes these, ISIL hopes to weaken our collective resolve. And once again, they have failed. Their barbarism only stiffens our unity and determination to wipe this vile terrorist organization off the face of the Earth.

Today, on the ground in Syria and in Iraq, ISIL is on the defensive. Our 66-member coalition, including Arab partners, is on the offensive. We have momentum, and we intend to keep that momentum.

Our air campaign—more than 1,100—11,500 strikes so far—continues to pound ISIL targets. It's harder than ever for them to move and for their masses to—or for them to mass forces. When they try, we take them out. ISIL still has managed to advance in some areas of Syria and Iraq, but it has not had a single successful major offensive operation on the ground there since last summer. So it's been nearly a year since they were able to mount a major successful offensive operation.

We continue to take out their leaders, their commanders, and those plotting terrorist attacks. For ISIL's leadership, it has been a bad few months. Coalition forces captured Abu Dawud, a leader of its chemical weapons program, giving us critical information that's allowed us to unleash more strikes against those sites. We have removed Abu Sarah, ISIL financier in Iraq; Haji Iman, their finance chief; Ezat al-Jabouri, an ISIL figure in northern Iraq; not to mention a number of top foreign terrorist fighters. They are off the field. And in the days and weeks ahead, we intend to take out more. Every day, ISIL leaders wake up and understand that it could be their last.

With coalition support, local forces continue to push ISIL back in Iraq. In Anbar Province, Iraqi forces have consolidated their gains around Ramadi and pushed up the Euphrates River Valley, liberating several villages from ISIL and retaking parts of the town of Hit. In a recent offensive in the Tigris River Valley, Iraqi forces have pushed toward Mosul. And as Secretary Kerry made clear in his visit to Baghdad last week, we will continue to assist Iraq—and so must the entire world—as it works to stabilize liberated areas and promote governance and development that is inclusive of all Iraqi communities so that ISIL cannot return.

Meanwhile, in Syria, a coalition of local forces—some backed by U.S. Special Operations Forces—continue to make progress, pushing ISIL out of the strategic town of al-Shaddadi. ISIL was dug in there, and that battle was expected to last several weeks. Instead, ISIL was defeated in several days. With this, we've severed a critical supply line between ISIL strongholds of Raqqa in Syria and Mosul in Iraq, tightening the squeeze on ISIL in both areas. In this offensive alone, these local forces in Syria have pushed ISIL out of about 2,800 square miles. In the north, fighting continues as local forces fight to eject ISIL from its last pocket along the border with Turkey.

In other words, the ISIL core in Syria and Iraq continues to shrink. Their ranks of fighters are estimated to be at the lowest levels in about 2 years, and more and more of them are realizing that their cause is lost. Our cyber operations are disrupting their command-and-control and communications. We continue to target ISIL's financial infrastructure, including its oil wells, refineries, and supply lines. We've reduced their oil production and their oil revenue. And every dollar we deny them means one less dollar to pay their fighters and to fund their terror.

As I've said repeatedly, the only way to truly destroy ISIL is to end the Syrian civil war that ISIL has exploited. So we continue to work for a diplomatic end to this awful conflict. The cessation of hostilities in the Syrian civil war has largely held for about 6 weeks. It has reduced the violence, although not eliminated it, but that reduction is meaningful, and it's allowed some humanitarian aid to reach the Syrian people. So the cessation has saved lives. But as we're seeing around Aleppo and other areas, the cessation is tenuous and under strain. We've seen repeated violations by the Asad regime, continued attacks by Al Qaida's al-Nusra affiliate, and many Syrians continue to be deprived of desperately needed food, water, and medicine.

Talks are now resuming in Geneva. And the United States will continue to do everything that we can to help the cessation succeed and to advance a political solution to the Syrian civil war. And that includes a vision endorsed by the U.N. Security Council, including Russia, a process that brings all Syrians together under a transitional governing body, a new Constitution, and free elections. The United States recognizes, as do people all across Syria, that such a process must include a transition away from Asad. And the future of Syria will be on the agenda when I meet with our Gulf Cooperation Council partners next week in Saudi Arabia.

Beyond Syria and Iraq, we continue to go after ISIL wherever it tries to rear its ugly head. We're helping partners strengthen their security forces, from Africa to Afghanistan. As we, our allies and partners have made it harder for foreign terrorists to reach Syria and Iraq, we've seen an uptick in the number of ISIL fighters heading to Libya. So we're going to continue to use the full range of our tools to roll ISIL back from Libya while assisting the new and nascent Libyan Government as it works to secure their country.

I do want to point out that even as we work to destroy ISIL, we continue to go after the remnants of Al Qaida that still pose a significant threat to U.S. interests, our allies and the homeland. In Syria, we targeted a senior leader of al-Nusra, Abu Firas al-Suri. In another strike in Syria, we took out five other Al Qaida operatives. In Yemen, our recent strike against a training camp used by Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula took out dozens of terrorist fighters. In Somalia, we took out a senior leader of al-Shabaab, Hassan Ali Dhoore, who was

responsible for the attacks that killed innocent civilians, including Americans. So once again, we're sending a message: If you target Americans, you have no safe haven. We will find you.

And finally, we will continue to work closely with our allies and partners, including in Europe, to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters and prevent attacks. I want to point out that our intelligence professionals and those of other nations have stopped numerous terrorist operatives in Syria and Iraq from entering Europe, thereby preventing attacks and gaining valuable intelligence. The world does not always hear about the success of our intelligence services, but it's a testament to the skills and tireless efforts of our intelligence professionals, and I want to make sure that the world does not forget it. Our team of experts, surge teams, recently returned from Brussels and Athens.

And we're going to be sending teams to other countries so that we keep improving border security and screening of travelers and share more information. Because even the smallest gap when critical information is not shared or when a potential terrorist slips through the cracks can be deadly. And building on my invitation at our Nuclear Security Summit, we're going to continue to look for ways for intelligence services around the world to share more information against terrorist threats.

So it's appropriate that we're here today. It gives me a chance to thank all the dedicated men and women across the CIA and our intelligence community, as well as every level of Federal, State, and local government agencies who are involved in this effort. They are working around the clock to keep us safe. They don't get a lot of attention, but their work is tough, and it is critical, and I rely on it, and everybody up here relies on it in order to make informed decisions and to protect the American people.

As the stars on the Memorial Wall here attest, many have given their lives so that we can live free. We're safer because of their patriotic service. And tomorrow my National Security Adviser, Susan Rice, will address all the elements of our comprehensive strategy to destroy ISIL. That includes working with partners around the world to counter ISIL's hateful ideology, as well as protecting our homeland and working with communities here at home so that we stay resilient.

In closing, I want to note that we're about to mark the 3 years since the bombing of the Boston Marathon. Once again, we'll remember the lives we lost and the survivors who continue to recover: to walk and, in many cases, to run again. And I just want to remind the American people once again of what Boston taught us: how to be strong, how to be resilient.

In the face of terrorists who try to spread panic, we have to refuse to give in to fear. We have to stay true to our values of liberty and diversity and openness. In the face of madmen who only know how to kill, we're going to keep on living our lives and trying to lift people up. We go to our stadiums. We cheer for our teams. We thrive in our cities. We run our races, as they will next week in Boston.

In other words, we carry on. Terrorists like ISIL and Al Qaida, they can't destroy a great nation like the United States of America. I spent time before I came here at a science fair at the White House. You want to get a sense of why I'm always confident about America, meet some of those young people and what they're creating, what they're inventing, the diseases they're trying to cure, the energy they're trying to generate, the hope that they want to bring and the light they want to shine to the entire world. That's who we are. You can't beat that.

Across more than 200 years, we've prevailed over much greater threats than the one we pose now. So we are focused, and we are going to win, in large part because of outstanding work of individuals who are here today. But we should be confident about how effective not only our military and our intelligence and our diplomatic teams are, but the basic character of the American people. As long as we hold to that, we're going to be just fine.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to ISIL operative Sulayman Dawud al-Bakkar, also known as Abu Dawud; and President Bashar al-Asad of Syria.

Remarks at the Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride Opening Ceremony
April 14, 2016

The President. Good morning, everybody!

Audience members. Good morning!

The President. Oh, welcome to the White House! Thank you, William, for your outstanding service, and your beautiful family. I heard, I think, your youngest one saying: "Daddy! It's Daddy!" [*Laughter*] So she's proud too.

Vice President Joe Biden. See her waving at you?

The President. Hey, you. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank outstanding advocates on behalf of our men and women in uniform and our veterans. First of all, our Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Mr. Secretary McDonald. Please give him a big round of applause. And somebody who's got veterans' backs every single day, Vice President Biden. Please give him a big round of applause. [*Applause*] They like you.

Now, let me just first of all say, this seems to be an exceptionally good-looking group here. I do want to check, though, to see how the distribution is. First of all, I understand we do have some Army here. Navy! [*Applause*] Air Force! [*Applause*] Marines! [*Applause*] Coast Guard! [*Applause*] All right, Coast Guard. [*Laughter*] And we've got some of your biggest fans, which is our extraordinary military families. Yes.

We hold a lot of events here at the White House, but few are as inspiring as this one. Over the past 7 years, this has become one of our favorite traditions. This year, we've got 40 Active Duty riders and 25 veterans. Many of you are recovering from major injuries. You've learned how to adapt to a new life. Some of you are still working through wounds that are harder to see, like posttraumatic stress. And like countless riders across the country, part of this great movement is to help each other, for all of us to see each other get across that finish line. And that's how America is supposed to work. That's how our military works. And it doesn't stop when you take off the uniform.

We're joined by Marine Captain Jessica Bilkovich. Where's Jessica? There she is, back there. Jessica was injured in training, but went on to serve in Afghanistan. And over time, her injuries compounded. In addition to intense back pain, she was also struggling with posttraumatic stress and depression. It took her 6 months to make the phone call for help, but thanks to the love and support of her husband, she finally reached out. And as part of her treatment, she discovered cycling. On her first ride, Jessica says, "I felt so free, like a weight was coming off." The Soldier Ride gives her the chance to do what she loves. And, Jessica, you are an inspiration; we could not be prouder of the example that you're setting for so many people.

We have Army Staff Sergeant Casey McEuin. Where's Casey? Casey is back there. Decorated veteran, Casey served for 15 years with the 4th Infantry Division, including in Afghanistan.

Audience member. Hooah!

The President. Injured in an attack on his outpost, he had to medically retire, something he had never imagined. And he felt lost, struggling to find work and living out of his Jeep. And then, some veterans' service organizations helped him get back on his feet. And today, he's still fighting for his brothers and sisters in arms, working at Hired Heroes USA, which helps connect our returning heroes with job opportunities. Casey is a proud rider today. We are proud of you, Casey. Thank you.

And that's what's so remarkable about this ride, dreamt up by a bartender. [*Laughter*] Yes, some of my best ideas have come in a bar. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Hooah!

The President. You too, huh? [*Laughter*] But this is one of those ideas that the next day, actually, it was still good. [*Laughter*] It's a reminder—that was not in the script. [*Laughter*]

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. Yes. [*Laughter*]

The President. It's a reminder of the power of one person to launch a movement that changes people's lives. It's a reminder of the sacrifices that our men and women in uniform have made to keep our Nation free. And it's a reminder that, for those who are called to

serve, their mission doesn't end on the battlefield: It's one you carry with you for the rest of your lives.

Our veterans will tell you themselves, they may have put away their uniforms, but they're not finished serving their country. That includes our wounded warriors who here today, who often tell me that as soon as they can, they want to serve their country again. Service is in their DNA. Giving back is what you all do.

But as we all know, many of our returning heroes still have a hard time connecting opportunities to community and finding ways to serve. And today I want to thank our incredible veterans' service organizations who step up for veterans every day, making that connection. Organizations like The Mission Continues. Organizations like Team Red, White, and Blue. Organizations like Team Rubicon.

So I know you guys are ready to ride. I just want to close with a quick story. We're joined today by Air Force Technical Sergeant Jason Miller. Where's Jason?

T. Sgt. Jason Miller. Right here, sir.

The President. There's Jason right there. Jason served four combat tours in Afghanistan and Iraq. Came home with his body intact, but inside he was struggling with wounds nobody could see. And Jason doesn't mind me telling you all that he got depressed enough that he considered taking his life. Four years ago, he wrote me a letter about what he was going through. And he told me about how hard it was to get the services and the support that he needed. As luck would have it, right around that time I happened to meet with Team Rubicon, which deploys veterans for emergency response to disasters. And in addition to making sure that the VA was following up with Jason, I also asked Team Rubicon to get in touch with him. It helps when you're Commander in Chief. [*Laughter*] You've got—folks take your phone call. [*Laughter*]

Team Rubicon reached out. Jason ended up joining Team Rubicon, deployed to Moore, Oklahoma, which was devastated by a tornado. And feeling an immediate bond with his teammates, he threw himself into the work of helping people pick up their lives. In the process, he found a path to a new life of his own. And when Jason talks about what this new opportunity to serve means, he quotes Ghandi. He says, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

And Jason's spirit, the spirit of all of you, is the story of our Armed Forces. It's about dedicating your life to a cause that is bigger than yourself. It's about support and love for each other and for our country that flows through everybody who serves under our proud flag. And it's about the country that pledges to be with you every step of the way, not just when we need you, but also when you need us.

That's why every day I have left—that I have left in this office, I'm going to keep doing everything that I can to make sure that we serve you as well as you've served us. And that means making sure you get the care and benefits that you've earned and that you deserve. It means making sure you and your families have the opportunities to continue to contribute to our Nation's success, to achieve your own dreams. You represent what's best about our Nation, and I hope all of American—all of the American people along the route will come out and show their support for these heroes, not just today, but every single day.

So God bless you. God bless all our military families, all who serve. God bless America.

With that, we are going to let William strap up, and then I am going to blow the horn, which I always really enjoy. [*Laughter*] All right, come on.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:31 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Capt. William B. Reynolds III, USA (Ret.), board member, Team Red, White, & Blue, who introduced the President; and Chris Carney, founder, Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride.

The President's Weekly Address
April 16, 2016

Hello, everybody. One of America's greatest strengths is our free market. A thriving private sector is the lifeblood of our economy. It's how we create jobs, expand opportunities, and give everybody a shot at success. It's what's made America the strongest country on Earth.

The most essential ingredient in a healthy free market is competition. But right now too many companies are engaging in behaviors that stifle competition, like blocking new competitors from entering the market or limiting the information and options that give consumers real choice. As a consequence, the rest of us pay higher prices for lower quality products and services. Workers receive lower wages than they otherwise would. Small businesses and entrepreneurs can get squeezed out of the market. And none of that is fair or good for our economy.

The deck should not be stacked in favor of the wealthiest individuals and the biggest corporations, against working Americans. That's why my administration is doing everything we can to reverse this trend and promote more competition in the marketplace. In addition to enforcing the rules on the books, I've directed Federal agencies to identify anticompetitive behavior in different industries and find new and specific ways to promote competition.

One industry that's ripe for change is cable TV. Right now 99 percent of cable and satellite TV customers rent set-top boxes from their providers. According to one survey, this costs households an average of more than $230 per year. We spend some $20 billion to rent these devices. While we have almost unlimited choice in what we watch on television, from traditional programming to online content, there's next to no competition to build a better, user-friendly product that allows you to easily access all this content in one place. So most consumers just rent whatever the cable company offers. Because we have to. That means companies have little incentive to innovate. As a consequence, we need multiple devices and controllers to access content from different sources. That makes no sense. So my administration has encouraged the FCC to remove the barriers to competition that prevent new players from offering innovative cable box options to consumers.

We know this works. For years, Americans had to rent our telephones from the phone company. This was a while ago, but when the FCC finally unlocked competition for home phones, the marketplace was flooded with all kinds of phone options with new features and at different price points. Consumers suddenly had many options. And the whole industry moved forward as a result. The same can happen with cable boxes and in dozens of areas of our economy, all of which can make a difference in your everyday life.

The bottom line is, competition is good for consumers, workers, businesses, and our economy. So I'm going to keep doing everything I can to make sure that our free market works for everyone. Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:35 a.m. on April 15 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on April 16. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 15, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 16. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Message to the Congress on Blocking Property and Suspending Entry Into the United States of Persons Contributing to the Situation in Libya
April 19, 2016

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (the "order") expanding the scope of the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13566 of February 25, 2011, with respect to the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by the situation in Libya.

In the order, I find that the ongoing violence in Libya, including attacks by armed groups against Libyan state facilities, foreign missions in Libya, and critical infrastructure, as well as human rights abuses, violations of the arms embargo imposed by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1970 (2011), and misappropriation of Libya's natural resources threaten the peace, security, stability, sovereignty, democratic transition, and territorial integrity of Libya, and thereby constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. The order blocks the property and interests in property of persons determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State:

- to be responsible for or complicit in, or to have engaged in, directly or indirectly, any of the following:
  - actions or policies that threaten the peace, security, or stability of Libya, including through the supply of arms or related materiel;
  - actions or policies that obstruct, undermine, delay, or impede, or pose a significant risk of obstructing, undermining, delaying, or impeding, the adoption of or political transition to a Government of National Accord or a successor government;
  - actions that may lead to or result in the misappropriation of state assets of Libya; or
  - threatening or coercing Libyan state financial institutions or the Libyan National Oil Company;
- to be planning, directing, or committing or to have planned, directed, or committed, attacks against any Libyan state facility or installation (including oil facilities), against any air, land, or sea port in Libya, or against any foreign mission in Libya;
- to be involved in, or to have been involved in, the targeting of civilians through the commission of acts of violence, abduction, forced displacement, or attacks on schools, hospitals, religious sites, or locations where civilians are seeking refuge, or through conduct that would constitute a serious abuse or violation of human rights or a violation of international humanitarian law;
- to be involved in, or to have been involved in, the illicit exploitation of crude oil or any other natural resources in Libya, including the illicit production, refining, brokering, sale, purchase, or export of Libyan oil;
- to be a leader of an entity that has, or whose members have, engaged in any activity described above;
- to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, logistical, or technological support for, or goods or services in support of any of the activities described above or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order; or
- to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, any person whose property and inter-

ests in property are blocked pursuant to the order.

In addition, the order suspends entry into the United States of any alien determined to meet one or more of the above criteria.

I have delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, the authority to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the order. All agencies of the United States Government are directed to take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of the order.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
April 19, 2016.

NOTE: Executive Order 13726 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks With King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia Following a Meeting With Gulf Cooperation Council Leaders in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
April 21, 2016

King Salman. Mr. President, on behalf of my brothers, the leaders of the GCC countries, and on my personal behalf, I'd like to thank you for attending this constructive and fruitful summit, which will contribute to enhancing the consultation and cooperation between the GCC countries and the United States.

I commend the constructive discussions and the points reached. I would like to emphasize the keenness and commitment of the GCC countries to develop the historical and strategic relations between our respective countries and the United States of America to serve our mutual interest as well as the security and peace of the region and the world.

We wish you all health and happiness, and we wish our countries and peoples security, stability, and prosperity.

President Obama. Well, thank you very much, Your Majesty.

Once again, I want to thank His Majesty and the Government and people of Saudi Arabia for their hospitality, as well as Secretary General Zayani and all of our GCC countries for another successful summit.

I just want to make a brief comment on what we've accomplished. Last year, at our summit at Camp David, we agreed to build an even stronger partnership between our nations. We already had strong bilateral relations and, collectively, had a shared vision of peace and prosperity in the region. But we felt that we could do more, given the new challenges that had arisen.

Today we reviewed the important progress that we've made together. I reaffirmed the policy of the United States to use all elements of our power to secure our core interests in the Gulf region and to deter and confront external aggression against our allies and our partners. And we reached a common vision on how to move forward together in key areas.

We remain united in our fight to destroy ISIL, or Daesh, which is a threat to all of us. And the United States will help our GCC partners ensure that their special operations forces are interoperable, and GCC nations will continue to increase their contributions to the fight against ISIL and the coalition that we've formed. We'll continue to offer support to Iraq as it liberates and stabilizes towns and cities from ISIL control, and we'll remain leading donors of humanitarian aid to the peoples of Syria and Iraq who have suffered so much.

We agreed to continue working closely to deescalate and resolve regional conflicts. In Syria, the cessation of hostilities is obviously under tremendous strain, including continued violations by the Asad regime. This violence is yet another reminder that there's only one way

to end this civil war, as our GCC partners agree: a transitional governing body, a new Constitution with free elections, including a transition away from Asad.

With regard to Yemen, we urged all parties to abide by the cessation of hostilities so that humanitarian aid can be reached to the Yemeni people and the peace process can proceed. With regard to Libya, we agreed to keep building support for the new national unity Government.

Given the ongoing threats in the region, the United States will continue to increase our security cooperation with our GCC partners, including helping them improve their own capacity to defend themselves.

And I thanked our GCC partners for their support of the comprehensive deal that has now cut off every single one of Iran's pathways to a nuclear weapon. That makes the region safer. We'll remain vigilant to ensure that Iran fulfills its commitments, just as we will fulfill ours.

Even with the nuclear deal, we recognize collectively that we continue to have serious concerns about Iranian behavior. Our nations committed to continuing to interdict illegal Iranian arms shipments in the region, impose costs on Iran for its ballistic missile program, and oppose Iran's destabilizing activities in the region.

At the same time, as I said at Camp David last year, none of our nations have an interest in conflict with Iran. We welcome an Iran that plays a responsible role in the region, one that takes concrete, practical steps to build trust and resolve its differences with its neighbors by peaceful means and abides by international rules and norms.

And finally, even as these summits focus on security issues, it remains the case that true and lasting security also depends on governance and an economy that serves all its citizens and respects universal human rights. And with this in mind, the United States and the GCC will launch a new high-level economic dialogue with a focus on adjusting to lower oil prices, increasing our economic ties, and supporting GCC reforms as they work to provide jobs and opportunities to their young people and all of their citizens.

So again, I want to thank His Majesty and all of our GCC partners for this very successful summit. When we look back on the past year, a lot has gotten done. I'm confident that a year from now we will be able to say that because of these actions, all of our nations are more peaceful and more secure and more prosperous. And it underscores the enduring friendship and partnership between the United States and the countries that are represented around this table.

Thank you for your hospitality.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 3:55 p.m. in Conference Hall 1 at Diriyah Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary General Abdul Latif bin Rashid Al Zayani of the Gulf Cooperation Council; and President Bashar al-Asad of Syria. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known as Daesh. King Salman spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement—United States-Gulf Cooperation Council Second Summit Leaders Communique
April 21, 2016

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

At the invitation of King Salman ibn Abdulaziz, heads of State and Government of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries and the United States convened today in Riyadh to reaffirm the GCC-U.S. strategic partnership in pursuit of a stable, secure, and prosperous region. They reviewed the substantial progress made since the first GCC-U.S. Summit in May 2015 at Camp David, including measures to strengthen GCC-U.S. co-

operation and deepen the partnership between the GCC and the United States. Recognizing the scope of the region's challenges, leaders also committed to urgently undertake additional steps to intensify the campaign to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, Daesh) and al-Qa'ida; de-escalate and seek to resolve regional conflicts; strengthen GCC states' capacity to address external and internal threats; and address Iran's destabilizing activities, while also working to reduce regional and sectarian tensions that fuel instability.

Stabilizing the Region

The leaders discussed a shared vision for addressing the most pressing conflicts in the region, welcoming the important progress achieved since the Camp David summit, while also underscoring the need to solidify gains. To build on this progress, leaders reaffirmed their support for the common principles decided at Camp David, including a shared recognition that there is no military solution to the region's armed civil conflicts, which can only be resolved through political and peaceful means; respect for all states' sovereignty and non-interference in their internal affairs; and the need for inclusive governance in conflict-ridden societies as well as protection of all minorities and of human rights.

The leaders expressed solidarity with the Syrian people and emphasized the importance of the full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254, to include immediate humanitarian access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas and the release of any arbitrarily detained persons. Leaders also emphasized their resolve to strengthen the cessation of hostilities. They reaffirmed the need for a political transition away from Bashar Asad that preserves state institutions and sustains renewed focus on the fight against ISIL and the Nusrah Front.

The GCC and United States also expressed their deep concern for the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons. They welcomed plans by the United States to convene a High-Level Summit on Refugees in September 2016, recognizing the opportunity it affords to galvanize additional international support. Ahead of that Summit, the United States and GCC countries underscored the need to provide additional assistance for refugees.

The leaders encouraged additional Iraqi progress toward reducing sectarian tensions and promoting inclusive governance and reconciliation among all Iraqis, including by urgently addressing the legitimate grievances of all components of Iraqi society through the implementation of reforms. The leaders pledged to intensify support for Iraqi measures to put ISIL on a path to a lasting defeat. They called for intensified efforts to stabilize territory liberated from ISIL and deliver additional aid to Iraq's refugees and IDPs.

The leaders welcomed the cessation of hostilities in Yemen, pledged to support it, and urged all Yemeni parties to also abide by it. They expressed continued strong support for U.N. envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed's work and emphasized the importance of achieving progress in talks convening in Kuwait. They urged all parties to make the difficult decisions necessary to achieve a durable, inclusive political settlement of the conflict, according to the terms of UNSCR 2216 (2015), GCC Initiative, and Yemen's National Dialogue Outcomes. Acknowledging the tremendous human pain and suffering of the Yemeni people, GCC leaders pledged to further facilitate the unimpeded, timely delivery of humanitarian assistance, food, medicine, fuel, and commercial goods to all of Yemen, as rapidly as possible. They also undertook to support the long-term reconstruction of Yemen, including through its economic integration with the GCC economies.

Regarding Libya, leaders welcomed the recent seating of the Government of National Accord in Tripoli. They expressed the strong view that all Libyans throughout the country must overcome attempted obstructions by spoilers, respect the Government's authority and legitimacy, and embrace this important opportunity for a peaceful and more prosperous future. The GCC and United States called on the international community to assist the Government of National

Accord's work addressing the challenges facing Libya, including the grave threat posed by ISIL.

The GCC countries and United States also underscored the necessity of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of a just, lasting, comprehensive peace agreement that results in a sovereign and contiguous Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel. Toward that end, the leaders reaffirmed the enduring importance of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and determined to remain closely coordinated on efforts to encourage the parties to demonstrate—through policies and actions—their commitment to a two-state solution.

Defeating ISIL and al-Qa'ida

Underscoring their shared commitment to defeat terrorism in all of its forms, both the GCC and United States welcomed progress reversing ISIL's territorial gains in Iraq and Syria. The United States welcomed GCC members' participation in and support for the international Counter-ISIL coalition and commended the rigorous efforts by GCC member states to prevent terrorist attacks, including by bolstering information sharing on foreign terrorist fighters, as well as actions by Gulf partners to counter ISIL's hateful ideology and message, and more broadly to counter violent extremism. Expressing concern at attempts by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIL to take advantage of the vacuum of authority in Yemen, they emphasized the importance of actions to counter this threat in parallel with progress reaching a political settlement of the conflict. Leaders received an update on the recently-formed Islamic Counterterrorism Coalition, and pledged to further strengthen their counterterrorism partnership.

Iran and Regional Stability

The United States and the GCC states reiterated support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran, noting that successful implementation of the JCPOA, thus far, has blocked Iran's pathways to a nuclear weapon and enhanced regional security and stability. Leaders reaffirmed the need to remain vigilant about addressing Iran's destabilizing actions in the region, including its ballistic missile program and support for terrorist groups such as Hizballah and other extremist proxies, in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, and elsewhere. To help inform a shared approach to those activities, the GCC and the United States pledged to increase information sharing on Iran and other asymmetric threats in the region. GCC countries also committed to redouble their engagement on U.S. offers of maritime security cooperation, and to expeditiously reach consensus on steps necessary to implement an integrated ballistic missile defense early warning system. The United States and the GCC stressed the need for broader dialogue to resolve the region's conflicts, as well as their shared interest in reducing sectarian tensions. GCC countries reaffirmed their willingness to build trust and resolve longstanding differences through engagement with Iran; it being understood that Iran must engage the region according to the principles of good neighborliness, strict non-interference in domestic affairs, and respect for territorial integrity, consistent with international law, including the United Nations Charter.

Strengthening GCC Capacity to Address External and Internal Threats

The United States policy to use all elements of power to secure its core interests in the Gulf region, and to deter and confront external aggression against its allies and partners, as it did during the Gulf War, is unequivocal. The United States remains prepared to work jointly with the GCC states to deter and confront an external threat to any GCC state's territorial integrity that is inconsistent with the U.N. charter. GCC leaders, in turn, committed to strengthening their engagement on U.S. offers of security assistance, cooperation, and training aimed at enhancing the Gulf states' ability to play a larger role in addressing regional challenges.

Leaders were briefed on the April 20 meeting of U.S. and GCC defense ministers. Validating the importance of GCC-U.S. training exercises, they announced that GCC countries

and the United States would immediately begin planning for a combined military exercise in March 2017, to showcase the full breath of GCC-U.S. security capabilities. GCC countries endorsed quick implementation of a new initiative to train specially-designated Special Operations Forces (SOF) units from each GCC country, in order to bolster interoperable counterterrorism capabilities. GCC countries also supported expanded cooperation on cyber security, endorsing peacetime cyber norms codified by Saudi Arabia, the United States, and other G–20 countries.

The U.S. expressed its readiness to support GCC efforts to diversify their economies, provide more effective governance, and adapt to economic challenges posed by low oil prices and changing demographics. Toward that end, GCC countries endorsed a U.S. proposal to inaugurate a ministerial-level GCC-U.S. economic dialogue in 2016, to supplement the activities undertaken under the GCC-U.S. Framework Agreement on Economic, Trade, Investment and Technical Cooperation of 2012. In addition to strengthening GCC-U.S. economic and investment ties, this dialogue would seek to assist GCC countries' implementation of economic and energy policies aimed at making available additional resources to meet their development needs. Leaders reaffirmed the mutual benefits of cooperation on climate issues, and committed to work toward the adoption of an amendment to the Montreal Protocol in 2016 to phasedown hydrofluorocarbons.

An Enduring Partnership

Leaders committed to continue coordinating closely on issues of mutual concern, including through meetings of GCC and U.S. foreign and defense ministers, and support for an annual leader-level Summit. The United States welcomed GCC interest in opening an office in Washington to advance cooperation, and will support efforts toward that end. Leaders also directed that all U.S.–GCC working groups meet at least twice annually, to advance partnership on counterterrorism, streamlining the transfer of critical defense capabilities, missile defense, military preparedness, and cyber security. For continuity of those efforts, and speedy implementation of decisions expressed in the Camp David Joint Statement of May 14, 2015, its annex, and this communique, they directed their respective administrations to strengthen the framework of the GCC-U.S. partnership, including the Strategic Cooperation Forum.

Leaders expressed satisfaction with and stressed the central importance of an enduring GCC-U.S. partnership as a means to promote peace, security and stability in the region.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and U.N. Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
April 21, 2016

[*The President's remarks were joined in progress.*]

The President. ——the entire Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for their hospitality and their generosity and all my counterparts in the GCC who devoted the time and the energy to make sure that this was a successful summit.

You already heard my statement, so I'm going to take a couple of questions, starting with Kathleen Hennessey of AP. Where's Kathleen? Where are you? There you are.

Gulf Cooperation Council-U.S. Relations/Libya/Yemen/Iran/Iraq/Syria

Q. Thanks for doing this, Mr. President. In the lead-up to this trip, there was a lot of talk about strains in the relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, some of it stemming

from your comments about Gulf partners being "free riders" and specifically that Iran and Saudi Arabia should "share the neighborhood." I'm wondering if after your meeting you feel like you've eased any of those tensions, if that was the goal. And can you point to any evidence of greater cooperation or engagement in the campaign against ISIL? Do you feel now that the Gulf partners are carrying their weight?

The President. Well, I think that a lot of the strain was always overblown. The fact of the matter is, is that the friendship and cooperation that exist between the United States and the Gulf countries has been consistent for decades. During the course of our administration, the GCC countries have extensively cooperated with us on counterterrorism, on curbing the financing of terrorist activities. They are part of the ISIL—counter-ISIL coalition that has made progress both in Syria and in Iraq.

If you think about last year, when we had the Camp David meeting, you were already seeing the onset of conflict in Libya as well as in Yemen. And as we come to this meeting, in part because of the collective efforts of members of the GCC, we have a new Government in Libya that is very nascent, but has the opportunity finally to organize itself in a way that we haven't seen in a couple of years. That would not have happened had it not been for the effective diplomatic pressure that was applied by all the GCC countries, as well as the United States and the United Nations.

In Yemen, we now have a cessation of hostilities that allows us to build a peace process that can relieve the suffering of the people inside of Yemen. That would not have happened had it not been for the GCC-U.S. cooperation. We would not have gotten an Iran deal to get their nuclear weapons out had not the GCC been supportive of it.

So what is true between the United States and the GCC, as is true with all of our allies and friends, is that at any point in time, there are going to be differences in tactics. And part of the goal here, as well as the meeting at Camp David, is to make sure that not only do we share a broad common vision of how prosperity and stability and peace are achieved in this region and how we counter extremist activity, but that we have knowledge of what each party is doing on an ongoing basis.

I think it is no doubt true that when we entered into the negotiations with Iran around the nuclear deal, there was concern that in the interest of getting the deal done, we would somehow look the other way with respect to their other destabilizing activities. And in fact, what we are able to report is not only have we seen Iran do what it was supposed to do under the deal and the threat of an Iranian nuclear weapon is greatly reduced, but what we've also seen, what the GCC has seen, is our continued cooperation in, for example, interdicting Iranian efforts to arm the Houthi militias inside of Yemen. That, I think, has created some confidence.

But one of the things, at a time when the region is so fraught with so many different problems and challenges, is the need for more consistent institutionalized communication at every level of government. And that's part of what we've been able to achieve through these two summits. And my hope is, is that it will continue into the next administration. I think it has been highly useful, because the possibilities of misunderstanding increase when there's so much activity taking place.

I'll give you one last example. Inside of Iraq, there are understandable concerns about Iranian influence in the Iraqi Government at a time when the Iraqi Government is also critical for us fighting ISIL. It was very important, I think, for us to describe our assessment that Prime Minister Abadi is in fact effectively fighting against ISIL and trying to reach out to Sunnis inside of Iraq, while acknowledging that there are significant problems in terms of Government stability inside of Baghdad. And that's a reason for us not to withdraw, but rather to get more involved in helping to stabilize areas like Anbar, where we've not cleared out ISIL, but the towns that they were governing have been left devastated. And if we want Sunni communities to be able to rebuild themselves and to get back into the lives they were leading before ISIL took over, then we're go-

ing to have to help the Iraqi Government respond.

The same is true with respect to Syria. Right now the cessation of hostilities is very fragile and may be breaking down in part because of the Asad regime's continuing attacks on areas where they perceive they have an advantage. This is part of the reason why I called Mr. Putin on Monday, indicating to him that in the same way that we are continually urging moderate opposition inside of Syria to abide by the cessation of hostilities, he needs to be holding the regime into account.

For us to be able to describe the specifics of that conversation in a setting like this to give the opportunity for the other heads of state to ask questions about Russian intentions, I think, was extremely useful.

Iraq/Kuwait

Q. Were you able to secure any new commitments on the stabilization effort? I mean, you were asking for aid. Did you get any?

The President. We've been able to secure additional commitments with respect to the counter-ISIL campaign more broadly. With respect to direct help to the Iraqi Government, what I recommended was that we wait to assess how the current Government turmoil in Iraq plays itself out over the next couple of weeks before we make final decisions about how useful particular offers of assistance will be. Although, already what we've seen is, for example, the Government of Kuwait over the last year has deferred payments that were required under the U.N. resolution between Iraq and Kuwait. That's worth a couple of billion dollars to the Iraqi Government. And we described our efforts to make sure that in addition to the military assistance we're providing Iraq, that we're also focusing on these stabilization functions.

But frankly, right now in Baghdad, there's some big challenges in terms of Prime Minister Abadi forming a new Government—or a new Cabinet. Until that's settled, I think it's important for us to make sure that any additional stabilization dollars that are put in are going to be effectively spent.

Greg Jaffe [Washington Post]. Go ahead, Greg.

Iraq/Syria

Q. I was going to ask, since you just spoke about Prime Minister Abadi, how concerned are you about his hold on power? Are there things that the GCC partners can do to help solidify his government? And then, did you guys talk about a plan B in Syria if the cessation of hostilities falters? And then, lastly, I was just going to ask, have you contemplated adding additional special forces in Syria to bolster the counter-ISIL fight? And what might it take for you to make that decision?

The President. Good. On the first item, I'm concerned. I think Prime Minister Abadi has been a good partner for us. But interestingly enough, right now in Baghdad, the challenges within the Government don't fall along the usual lines of Kurdish-Sunni-Shia. There's actually significant dissension and disputes even among the Shia power blocks.

Obviously, ultimately, it's up to the Iraqis to make these decisions. It's not up to us, it's not up to the Iranians, it's not up to GCC countries. It's up to the Iraqi people to determine the Government that they form.

We do think, however, that it is vital for the health and stability of Iraq that the Cabinet and the makeup of Government is finalized and stabilized. And we've been urging them to get the job done. And we have contacts with all the various factions and parties, saying to them they have to take the long view and think about the well-being of the country at a time when they're still fighting Daesh, Mosul is still under ISIL control; at a time when, because of low oil prices, they've got challenges with respect to their budget. There's a dam that needs to be fixed. They've got a lot on their plate. Now is not the time for Government gridlock or bickering.

With respect to Syria, we had discussions about what options are available to us should the current cessation of hostilities break down. None of the options are good. It has been my view consistently that we have to get a political solution inside of Syria and that all the external actors involved have to be committed to that as

well as the actors inside of Syria. Certainly, that's what the Syrian people want. They want an end to the bombing. They want to be able to go back to their homes. They want to be able to farm their lands and run their businesses and send their kids to school.

And the problem with any plan B that does not involve a political settlement is that it means more fighting, potentially for years. And whoever comes out on top will be standing on top of a country that's been devastated and that will then take years to rebuild. So the sooner we can end fighting and resolve this in a political fashion, the better.

The primary reasons that we have been emphasizing the need for Asad to go is not just because he's killed his people and barrel bombed women and children, it's that it is hard to conceive of him being at the head of a Government that would end the fighting because it was perceived as legitimate. That's what we have to emphasize, that's what we have to work on. Okay?

I'm going to take one last question.

[*At this point, several reporters began speaking at once.*]

Q. Arab press, Mr. President. A question from the Arab press, please.

The President. Go ahead. Here's—I assume this is Arab press, not just you. Go ahead, but there are other people who are——

Q. [*Inaudible*]—from Al Saudia newspaper.

The President. I'm sorry, go ahead, please.

Q. My name is—[*inaudible*]. I'm from Al Saudia newspaper.

The President. Yes, go ahead.

Gulf Cooperation Council-U.S. Relations/Iran

Q. My question: What, Mr. President, do you think the main issue or case that you have a different opinion between GCC and the United States and this—something you think there is different?

The President. Yes, yes. Well, I think that, overall, there's a broad consensus in assisting each other in our collective security. The GCC hosts the United States, and we could not operate effectively militarily in the region if it weren't for GCC countries. Our intelligence sharing is vital in fighting against terrorism and has consistently improved.

We're starting to see the need to cooperate on new threats like cyber attacks, for example. Our efforts as a consequence of these summits to form a unified ballistic missile defense is very important. Our belief that the prosperity and stability of the region depends on countries treating all their citizens fairly and that sectarianism is an enemy of peace and prosperity: that if people are seeing themselves not as a citizen of a country, but as a member of a particular branch of Islam, that that is a recipe for countries falling apart. I think there's broad agreement there.

Probably, the biggest area where there's been tactical differences has been with respect to Iran. And the issue is not the need for shared cooperation to deter against Iranian provocations. On that, we're all agreed. I think that there has been concern, even when we were working on the Iran nuclear deal, that if we were in discussions with them about these issues, that somehow, Iran would feel emboldened to act more provocatively in the region.

And what I've said to them is, we have to have a dual track. We have to be effective in our defenses and hold Iran to account where it is acting in ways that are contrary to international rules and norms. But we also have to have the capacity to enter into a dialogue to reduce tensions and to identify ways in which the more reasonable forces inside of Iran can negotiate with the countries in the region, with its neighbors, so that we don't see an escalation of proxy fights across the region.

And I think that that view is one that is consistent with how many in the GCC view it, but because there's been so much mistrust that's been built up—in part because of Iranian provocations—that people are cautious and want to make sure that nobody is naive about what Iran may be doing to stir up problems in other countries.

And what we've consistently shown them is, we're not naive. But as I pointed out, during the height of the cold war, both Democratic Presi-

dents like John F. Kennedy and Republican Presidents like Ronald Reagan still negotiated with the Soviet Union. Even when the Soviet Union was threatening the destruction of the United States, there was still dialogue so that we could find ways to reduce tensions and the dangers of war and chaos. And that's the same approach that we have to take. Even as Iran is calling us the "Great Satan," we were able to get a deal done where they got rid of their nuclear stockpiles, and that makes us safer. That's not a sign of weakness, that's a sign of strength.

Okay? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:16 p.m. in the First Floor Lunch Room at Diriyah Palace. In his remarks, he referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known as Daesh. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Statement on the Death of Prince R. Nelson
April 21, 2016

Today the world lost a creative icon. Michelle and I join millions of fans from around the world in mourning the sudden death of Prince. Few artists have influenced the sound and trajectory of popular music more distinctly or touched quite so many people with their talent. As one of the most gifted and prolific musicians of our time, Prince did it all: funk, R&B, rock and roll. He was a virtuoso instrumentalist, a brilliant bandleader, and an electrifying performer.

"A strong spirit transcends rules," Prince once said. And nobody's spirit was stronger, bolder, or more creative. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, his band, and all who loved him.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom in London, United Kingdom
April 22, 2016

Prime Minister Cameron. Well, good afternoon, and welcome. It's great to welcome President Obama again, on his fifth visit to the United Kingdom.

Barack has been President for more than 7 years; I've been Prime Minister for nearly 6 years. And our two countries have been working together through some of the most difficult and troubled global times. We faced the aftermath of the banking crisis, the need to revive growth and create jobs in our economies, new threats to our security from Russia in the east to the rise of Islamist terrorism in the south, and of course, huge global challenges like Ebola and climate change. And through it all, the strong and essential partnership between our nations has never been more important.

When, 70 years ago last month, Winston Churchill first described the special relationship, it was not merely an enduring expression of friendship, it was a way of working together. It was about two nations, kindred spirits who share the same values and, so often, the same approaches to the many issues that we face.

And just as for our predecessors, that has been true for Barack and me, whether we're working to deliver economic security, national security, or new, emerging challenges. And today we've been discussing all three.

On economic security, we've succeeded in getting our economies growing and creating jobs for our people. The global economy still faces serious challenges, but last year, Britain and the United States were the two fastest growing major economies in the world.

And we both know just how important trade deals are in driving global growth. So Barack and I remain among the most determined to

achieve our vision of a U.S.-EU trade deal. And we're working hard to push this forward because it would add billions to our economies and set the standards for the rest of the world to follow.

On national security, together with our partners in the EU, we've used our economic muscle to avoid the calamity of an Iranian nuclear weapon. We've delivered sanctions against Russia in response to its aggression against Ukraine. We've secured the first-ever global and legally binding deal on climate change, being formally signed today by over 150 governments at the United Nations.

And we've transformed the way that we use our aid, our diplomacy, and our military together to make progress on some of the most difficult issues of our time. For example, in East Africa, we've helped to turn around the prospects for Somalia. For instance, thanks to an EU operation, led by Britain, supported by America, its waters are no longer a safe haven for pirates. And in West Africa, British leadership in Europe secured a billion euros to support our efforts in helping the people of the region to defeat the outbreak of Ebola, with Britain taking the lead in Sierra Leone, the United States in Liberia, France in Guinea.

But just as we've made important progress in all these areas, so there are many more that need a lot more work. There's no doubt that the situation in Libya is immensely challenging, but we now finally have a Government of National Accord with whom we can work, while in Syria and Iraq, we are continuing coalition efforts to defeat and degrade Daesh.

More than 25,000 Daesh fighters have now been killed, over 600 in the last month alone, with the total number of Daesh fighters now estimated to be at its lowest for about 2 years. The Iraqi security forces are steadily pushing Daesh out of its territory, this week almost entirely clearing them out of the town of Hit. And in Syria, our partners have liberated the large Kurdish areas in the northeast and cut off the main route between Raqqa and Mosul.

We also discussed efforts to deal with the migration crisis. This doesn't directly affect the United States, and in the U.K., we've maintained our borders, and we will continue to do so. But we both know the challenge this poses to our friends and our allies and to the continent of Europe. This is the sort of challenge that can only be tackled effectively through international cooperation. NATO is helping to reduce the number of migrants in the Eastern Mediterranean. And Barack and I have discussed how NATO might now contribute to the EU's efforts in the Central Mediterranean too.

We also need to do more to break the business model of the people smugglers, so, together with our EU partners and the Libyan Government, we'll look at whether there's more we can do to strength the Libyan Coast Guard. Barack and I will be discussing this further when we meet with the leaders of France, Germany, and Italy in Hannover on Monday. And this will be another opportunity to show that—how, working together, collectively, we can better protect ourselves from the threats that we face.

We also covered a number of new and emerging challenges where it will be more important than ever that we work together with our own international partners to identify problems and deal with them rapidly. Just as we've done with Ebola, we now need the same international cooperation on dealing with the Zika virus, on the challenge of antimicrobial resistance, on cybersecurity, and on tackling corruption.

Britain is holding a big anticorruption summit here in London next month, which Secretary Kerry will attend. And Barack and I have talked today about some of the things we wanted to achieve. One of the biggest problems is that if you're a country that wants to take action against corruption you have to go all around the globe to lobby for help. So we'd like to see an international anticorruption coordination center to help law enforcement agencies and investigators work together right across different jurisdictions. And if we get international agreement on this next month, both Britain and America will help contribute to set it up.

All this work we have done together, and at the same time, I think we've got to know each other very well. I'm honored to have Barack as a friend. He's taught me the rules of basketball. He's beaten me at table tennis. [*Laughter*] I remember very fondly the barbecue we had in Number 10 Downing Street, serving service men and women who serve our countries and serve our countries together here in the United Kingdom. I've always found Barack someone who gives sage advice. He's a man with a very good heart, and been a very good friend, and always will be a good friend, I know, to the United Kingdom.

Let me finish by saying this. In all the areas we've discussed today, our collective power and reach is amplified by Britain's membership of the European Union. Let me be clear. When it comes to the special relationship between our two countries, there's no greater enthusiast than me. I'm very proud to have the opportunity to be Prime Minister and to stand outside the White House, listening to this man, my friend, Barack, say that the special relationship between our countries has never been stronger. But I've never felt constrained in any way in strengthening this relationship by the fact that we're in the European Union.

In fact, quite the reverse. We deliver for our people through all the international groups that we're part of. We enhance our security through the membership of NATO. We further our prosperity through the G–7 and the G–20. And like those organizations, Britain's membership of the EU gives us a powerful tool to deliver on the prosperity and security that our people need and to stand up for the values that our countries share. And now, I think, is a time to stay true to those values and to stick together with our friends and allies in Europe and around the world.

Thank you very much.

Barack.

President Obama. Thank you, David. And as always, it is wonderful to be here in London and to meet with my good friend David Cameron. I confess I've also come back to wish Her Majesty the Queen a very happy 90th birthday. Earlier today Michelle and I had the honor to join Her Majesty and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh as their guests at Windsor Castle, where we conveyed the good wishes of the American people.

I have to say, I have never been driven by a Duke of Edinburgh before. [*Laughter*] And I can report that it was very smooth riding. As for Her Majesty, the Queen has been a source of inspiration for me, like so many people around the world. She is truly one of my favorite people. And should we be fortunate enough to reach 90, may we be as vibrant as she is. She's an astonishing person and a real jewel to the world and not just to the United Kingdom.

The alliance between the United States and the United Kingdom is one of the oldest and one of the strongest that the world has ever known. When the U.S. and the U.K. stand together, we make our countries more secure, we make our people more prosperous, and we make the world safer and better.

That's one of the reasons why my first overseas visit as President more than 7 years ago was here to London, at a time of global crisis. And the one thing I knew, as green as I was as a new President, was that it was absolutely vital that the United States and the United Kingdom, working together in an international forum, tackle the challenges that lie ahead. Our success depended on our ability to coordinate and to be able to leverage our relationship to have an impact on other countries.

I met with David on that visit. He wasn't yet Prime Minister. But just as our nations share a special relationship, David and I have shared an extraordinary partnership. He has proven to be a great friend and is one of my closest and most trusted partners. Over the 6 years or so that our terms have overlapped, we have met or spoken more times than I can count. We've shared our countries' beers with each other—he vouches for his, I vouch for mine—[*laughter*]—taken in a basketball game in America.

David, I think you should recall, we were actually partners in that ping-pong game. [*Laughter*] And we lost to some schoolchildren.

Prime Minister Cameron. Yes. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. I can't remember whether they were 8 or 10, but they were decidedly shorter than we were, and they whooped us. [*Laughter*]

Samantha and Michelle, our better halves, have become good friends as well. And it's the depth and the breadth of that special relationship that has helped us tackle some of the most daunting challenges of our time.

Around the world, our joint efforts, as David mentioned, have stopped the outbreak of Ebola, helped Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, forged a climate agreement in Paris that, hopefully, will help to protect our planet for future generations.

And today, on Earth Day, our governments, along with about 170 others, are in New York to sign that agreement. And the U.S. is committed to formally joining it this year, which should help it take effect years earlier than anybody expected.

We also discussed the full array of challenges to our shared security. We remain resolute in our efforts to prevent terrorist attacks against our people and to continue the progress that we've made in rolling back and ultimately defeating ISIL. Our forces, as David mentioned, are systematically degrading ISIL's finances and safe havens and removing its top leaders from the battlefield. And we've got to keep working to improve security and information sharing across Europe and to stem the flow of foreign fighters into and out of Syria.

We discussed our efforts to resolve political conflicts in the Middle East, from Yemen to Syria to Libya, in order to increase the prospects for stability. In Libya, going forward, we have an opportunity to support a new Government and help Libyans root out extremist elements. In Syria, as challenging as it is, we still need to see more progress towards an enduring cease-fire, and we continue to push for greater humanitarian access to the people who need it most.

We have to continue to invest in NATO so that we can meet our overseas commitments, from Afghanistan to the Aegean. We have to resolve the conflict in the Ukraine and reassure allies who are rightly concerned about Russian aggression. All NATO allies should aim for the NATO target of spending 2 percent of their GDP on defense, something that David has made sure happens here in the U.K. to meet that standard.

We discussed new actions we can take to address the refugee crisis, including with our NATO allies. And because a strong defense relies on more than just military spending, but on helping to unleash the potential of others to live freer and more prosperous lives, I want to thank the people of the United Kingdom for their extraordinary generosity as one of the world's foremost donors of humanitarian aid.

We talked about promoting jobs and stronger growth through increased transatlantic trade and investment so that our young people can achieve greater opportunity and prosperity. And yes, the Prime Minister and I discussed the upcoming referendum here on whether or not the U.K. should remain part of the European Union.

Let me be clear: Ultimately, this is something that the British voters have to decide for themselves. But as part of our special relationship, part of being friends is to be honest and to let you know what I think. And speaking honestly, the outcome of that decision is a matter of deep interest to the United States because it affects our prospects as well. The United States wants a strong United Kingdom as a partner. And the United Kingdom is at its best when it's helping to lead a strong Europe. It leverages U.K. power to be part of the European Union.

As I wrote in the op-ed here today, I don't believe the EU moderates British influence in the world, it magnifies it. The EU has helped to spread British values and practices across the continent. The single market brings extraordinary economic benefits to the United Kingdom. And that ends up being good for America, because we're more prosperous when one of our best friends and closest allies has a strong, stable, growing economy. Americans want Britain's influence to grow, including within Europe.

The fact is, in today's world, no nation is immune to the challenges that David and I just discussed. And in today's world, solving them

requires collective action. All of us cherish our sovereignty—my country is pretty vocal about that—but the U.S. also recognizes that we strengthen our security through our membership in NATO. We strengthen our prosperity through organizations like the G–7 and the G–20. And I believe the U.K. strengthens both our collective security and prosperity through the EU.

In the 21st century, the nations that make their presence felt on the world stage aren't the nations that go it alone, but the nations that team up to aggregate their power and multiply their influence. And precisely because Britain's values and institutions are so strong and so sound, we want to make sure that that influence is heard, that it's felt, that it influences how other countries think about critical issues. We have confidence that when the U.K. is involved in a problem that they're going to help solve it in the right way. That's why the United States cares about this.

For centuries, Europe was marked by war and by violence. The architecture that our two countries helped build with the EU has provided the foundation for decades of relative peace and prosperity on that continent. What a remarkable legacy, a legacy born in part out of what took place in this building.

Before we walked out, I happened to see Enigma on display. And that was a reminder of the incredible innovation and collaboration of the allies in World War II and the fact that neither of us could have won that alone. And in the same way, after World War II, we built out the international institutions that, yes, occasionally constrained us, but we willingly allowed those constraints because we understood that by doing so, we were able to institutionalize and internationalize the basic values of rule of law and freedom and democracy that would benefit our citizens as well as people around the world.

I think there's a British poet who once said, "No man is an island"—[*laughter*]—even an island as beautiful as this. We're stronger together. And if we continue to tackle our challenges together, then future generations will look back on ours, just as we look back on the previous generation of English and American citizens who worked so hard to make this world safer and more secure and more prosperous, and they'll say that we did our part. And that's important. That's important not just here; that's important in the United States as well.

Thanks.

Prime Minister Cameron. Thank you very much.

Right, we've got some questions. We're going to start with a question from the British press. We'll have Chris Ship from ITV.

United Kingdom's European Union Membership Referendum

Q. Thank you very much, Prime Minister. Chris Ship from ITV News.

Mr. President, you, yourself, acknowledge the controversial timing of your comments on the EU referendum and the spirited debate that we're having here. And I think you're right. In the weeks before your arrival here, Leave campaigners have said that you're acting hypocritically. America would not accept the loss of sovereignty that we have to accept as part of the EU. America would not accept the levels of immigration from Mexico that we have to accept from the EU. And therefore, in various degrees of politeness, they have said to you that you should really keep your views to yourself. [*Laughter*] With that in mind, Mr. President, do you still think it was the right decision to intervene in this debate? And can I ask you this: Crucially, what happens if the U.K. does decide in June to leave the European Union?

President Obama. Well, first of all, let me repeat: This is a decision for the people of the United Kingdom to make. I'm not coming here to fix any votes. I'm not casting a vote myself. I'm offering my opinion. And in democracies, you—everybody should want more information, not less. And you shouldn't be afraid to hear an argument being made. That's not a threat. That should enhance the debate.

Particularly, because my understanding is that some of the folks on the other side have been ascribing to the United States certain actions we'll take if the U.K. does leave the EU.

So they say, for example, that, well, we'll just cut our own trade deals with the United States. So they're voicing an opinion about what the United States is going to do. I figured you might want to hear it from the President of the United States what I think the United States is going to do. [*Laughter*]

And on that matter, for example, I think it's fair to say that maybe some point down the line, there might be a U.K.-U.S. trade agreement, but it's not going to happen anytime soon, because our focus is in negotiating with a big bloc, the European Union, to get a trade agreement done, and the U.K. is going to be in the back of the queue, not because we don't have a special relationship, but because, given the heavy lift on any trade agreement, us having access to a big market with a lot of countries, rather than trying to do piecemeal trade agreements, is hugely inefficient.

Now, to the subject at hand, obviously, the United States is in a different hemisphere, different circumstances, has different sets of relationships with its neighbors than the U.K. does. But I can tell you this. If right now I've got access to a massive market where I sell 44 percent of my exports, and now I'm thinking about leaving the organization that gives me access to that market and that is responsible for millions of jobs in my country and responsible for an enormous amount of commerce and upon which a lot of businesses depend, that's not something I'd probably do.

And what I'm trying to describe is a broader principle, which is, in our own ways—I mean, we don't have a common market in the Americas—but in all sorts of ways, the United States constrains itself in order to bind everyone under a common set of norms and rules that makes everybody more prosperous.

That's what we built after World War II. The United States and the U.K. designed a set of institutions, whether it was the United Nations or the Bretton Woods structure, IMF, World Bank, NATO, across the board. Now, that, to some degree, constrained our freedom to operate. It meant that occasionally we had to deal with some bureaucracy. It meant that on occasion we have to persuade other countries and we don't get a hundred percent of what we want in each case. But we knew that by doing so, everybody was going to be better off, partly because the norms and rules that were put in place were reflective of what we believe. If there were more free markets around the world and an orderly financial system, we knew we could operate in that environment. If we had collective defense treaties through NATO, we understood that we could formalize an architecture that would deter aggression, rather than us having, piecemeal, to put together alliances to defeat aggression after it already started. And that principle is what's at stake here.

And the last point I'll make on this—until I get the next question, I suspect—[*laughter*]—is that, as David said, this magnifies the power of the U.K. It doesn't diminish it. On just about every issue, what happens in Europe is going to have an impact here. And what happens in Europe is going to have an impact in the United States.

We just discussed, for example, the refugee and the migration crisis. And I've told my team—which is sitting right here, so they'll vouch for me—[*laughter*]—that we consider it a major national security issue that you have uncontrolled migration into Europe, not because these folks are coming to the United States, but because if it destabilizes Europe, our largest trading bloc—trading partner, it's going to be bad for our economy. If you start seeing divisions in Europe, that weakens NATO. That will have an impact on our collective security.

Now, if in fact I want somebody who's smart and common sense and tough and is thinking, as I do, in the conversations about how migration is going to be handled, somebody who also has a sense of compassion and recognizes that immigration can enhance, when done properly, the assets of a country, and not just diminish them, well, I want David Cameron in the conversation. Just as I want him in the conversation when we're having conversations—discussions about information sharing and counterterrorism activity. There—precisely because I have confidence in the U.K., and I know that if we're not working effectively with Paris or

Brussels, then those attacks are going to migrate to the United States and to London, I want one of my strongest partners in that conversation. So it enhances the special relationship. It doesn't diminish it.

Prime Minister Cameron. Let me just make, Chris, one point in response to that. I mean, this is our choice, nobody else's; the sovereign choice of the British people. But as we make that choice, it surely makes sense to listen to what our friends think, to listen to their opinion, to listen to their views. And that's what Barack has been talking about today.

But it's also worth remembering as we make this choice, it's a British choice about the British membership of the European Union. We're not being asked to make a choice about whether we support the German style of membership or the Italian style of membership. Britain has a special status in the European Union. We're in the single market; we're not part of the single currency. We're able to travel and live and work in other European countries, but we've maintained our borders, because we're not in the Schengen no-border zone.

And on this vital issue of trade, where Barack has made such a clear statement, we should remember why we are currently negotiating this biggest trade deal in the whole world and in the whole world's history, between the European Union and the United States. It's because Britain played an absolutely leading part in pushing for those talks to get going. Indeed, we announced them at the G–8 in Northern Ireland, when Britain was in the chair of that organization. We set the agenda for what could be an absolutely game-changing trade deal for jobs, for investment, because we were part of this organization.

So I just want to add those important points.

I think we have a U.S. question now.

President Obama. Justin Sink [Bloomberg News].

European Migration Crisis/United Kingdom's European Union Membership Referendum/Libya

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. Following on that, do you think that between Brexit and the migration issue, European unity is at a crisis point? What do you hope leaders gathering in Germany can concretely do about it? And do you expect those nations to militarily support, including the possibility of ground troops, the new Government in Libya to keep that situation from further straining Europe? While we're talking about future summits, I'm also wondering if maybe you could talk about whether you plan to go to Hiroshima when you visit Japan. And——

President Obama. Oh, come on, man. You're really stretching it. [*Laughter*]

Q. This one is for Prime Minister Cameron, and it's short. I promise.

Prime Minister Cameron, the President has come here to tell the U.K. that, as a friend, and speaking honestly, that they should stay in the EU. As a friend and speaking honestly, what would you advise American voters to do about Donald Trump? Thanks. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. That was so predictable.

Prime Minister Cameron. I'll let you take the first six——

President Obama. Yes, exactly.

Prime Minister Cameron. ——and then, I'll pick up that last one. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. I wouldn't describe European unity as in a crisis, but I would say it is under strain. And some of that just has to do with the aftermath of the financial crisis and the strains that we're all aware of with respect to the euro zone. I think it is important to emphasize, as David points out, that the U.K. is not part of the euro zone, and so the blowback to the British economy has been different than it is on the continent. But we've seen some divisions and difficulties between the southern and the northern parts of Europe. That's created some strains.

I think the migration crisis amplifies a debate that's taking place not just in Europe, but in the United States as well. At a time of globalization, at a time when a lot of the challenges that we face are transnational, as opposed to just focused on one country, there is a temptation to want to just pull up the drawbridge, either literally or figuratively. We see that played out in some of the debates that are taking place in the U.S. Presidential race. And that debate,

I think, is accelerated in Europe. But I'm confident that the ties that bind Europe together are ultimately much stronger than the forces that are trying to pull them apart.

Europe has undergone an extraordinary stretch of prosperity, maybe unmatched in the history of the world. And if you think about the 20th century and you think about the 21st century, 21st-century Europe looks an awful lot better. And I think the majority of Europeans recognize that. They see that unity and peace have delivered sustained economic growth, reduced conflict, reduced violence, enhanced the quality of life of people. And I'm confident that can continue.

But I do believe that it's important to watch out for some of these faultlines that are developing. And in that sense, I do think that the Brexit vote—which, if I'm a citizen of U.K., I'm thinking about it solely in terms of how is this helping me, how is this helping the U.K. economy, how is it helping create jobs here in the U.K.—that's the right way to think about it. But I do also think that this vote will send a signal that is relevant about whether the kind of prosperity that we've built together is going to continue or whether the forces of division end up being more prominent. And that's why it's—that's part of the reason why it's relevant to the United States and why I have had the temerity to weigh in on it.

What were your four other questions? [*Laughter*] I've got to figure I've knocked out two through that answer.

Q. Libya.

President Obama. With respect to Libya, both David and I discussed our commitment to try to assist this nascent Government. And it's a challenge, but there are people in this Government of National Accord that are genuinely committed to building back up a state. That's something we desperately want, because both the United States and United Kingdom, but also a number of our other allies, are more than prepared to invest in helping create border security in Libya and helping to drive out terrorists inside of Libya and trying to make sure that what could be a thriving society—a relatively small population, a lot of resources—this is not an issue where we should have to subsidize Libya. They're actually much better positioned than some other countries that we've been helping, if they can just get their act together. And we want to help provide that technical assistance to get that done.

There is no plans for ground troops in Libya. I don't think that's necessary. I don't think it would be welcomed by this new Government. It would send the wrong signal. This is a matter of, can Libyans come together? What we can do is to provide them our expertise. What we can do is provide them training. What we can do is provide them a roadmap for how they can get basic services to their citizens and build up legitimacy.

But I do think that the one area where both David and I are heavily committed is, as this progresses, we can't wait if ISIL is starting to get a foothold there. And so we are working not just with the Libyan Government, but a lot of our international partners, to make sure that we're getting the intelligence that we need and, in some cases, taking actions to prevent ISIL from having another stronghold from which to launch attacks against Europe or against the United States.

And I think you have to wait until I get to Asia to start asking me Asia questions. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Cameron. The question you asked me: This is not a general election. This is a referendum. And as Barack has explained, it's a referendum that affects, of course, the people of the United Kingdom very deeply, but it also does affect others in the European Union; it affects partners like America or Canada or Australia or New Zealand. And as I look around the world, it is hard to find—so far, I haven't found one—a country that wishes Britain well that thinks we ought to leave the European Union.

And I think that's—again, it's our choice. We'll make the decision. We'll listen to all the arguments. People want the facts. They want the arguments. They want to know the consequences. And I'll try to lay those out as Prime Minister as clearly as I can. But listening to our friends, listening to countries that wish us well, is part of the process and is a good thing to do.

As for the American elections, I've made some comments in recent weeks and months. I don't think now is a moment to add to them or subtract from them. [*Laughter*] But I think, Justin, as a Prime Minister who's been through two general elections leading my party, you always look on at the U.S. elections in awe of the scale of the process and the length of the process, and I marvel at anyone who is left standing at the end of it. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. Fortunately, we're term limited. [*Laughter*] So I, too, can look in awe at the process. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Cameron. We have another British question from Laura Kuenssberg from the BBC.

White House Bust of Winston Churchill/United Kingdom-U.S. Relations/United Kingdom's European Union Membership Referendum

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, you've made your views very plain on the fact that British voters should choose to stay in the EU. But in the interest of good friends always being honest, are you also saying that our decades-old special relationship that's been through so much would be fundamentally damaged and changed by our exit? If so, how? And are you also—do you have any sympathy with people who think this is none of your business?

And, Prime Minister, to you, if I may, some of your colleagues believe it's utterly wrong that you have dragged our closest ally into the EU referendum campaign. What do you say to them? And is it appropriate for the mayor of London, Boris Johnson, to have brought up President Obama's Kenyan ancestry in the context of this debate?

Prime Minister Cameron. Well, let me—this is a British question, let me go first. I mean, first of all, questions for Boris are questions for Boris are questions for Boris. They're not questions for me.

I don't have some special power over the President of the United States. Barack feels strongly about this and has said what he's said. And as I said, it's our decision as a sovereign people, the choice we make about Europe, but I think it's right to listen to and consider the advice of your friends.

And just to amplify one of the points that Barack made, we have a shared interest of making sure Europe takes a robust approach to Russian aggression. And if you take those issues of the sanctions that we put in place through the European Union, I think I can put my hand on my heart and say that Britain played a really important role, and continues to play an important role, in making sure those sanctions were put in place and kept in place. I'm not sure it would have happened if we weren't there.

Now, if it's in our interests—and it is in our interest for Europe to be strong against aggression—how can it be in our interests not to be at that table and potentially to see those sanctions not take place? And I think it's been that working between Britain and the United States over this issue that has helped to make a big difference.

I would just say about the special relationship, to me—and I'm passionate about this, and I believe it very, very deeply, for all the reasons of the history and the language and the culture, but also about the future of our country—and the truth is this: The stronger Britain is, and the stronger America is, the stronger that relationship will be. And I want Britain to be as strong as possible. And we draw our strength from all sorts of things that we have as a country: the fifth largest economy in the world; amazing Armed Forces, brilliant security and intelligence forces, that we were discussing about how well they work together; incredibly talented people; brilliant universities; the fact that we're members of NATO, the G–7, the G–20, the Commonwealth. But we also draw strength and project strength and project power and project our values and protect our people and make our country wealthier and our people wealthier by being in the European Union.

So I want Britain to be as strong as possible. And the stronger Britain is, the stronger that special relationship is, and the more that we can get done together to make sure that we have a world that promotes democracy and

peace and human rights and the development that we want to see across the world.

So to me, it's simple: Stronger Britain, stronger special relationship—that's in our interests, and that's in the interests of the United States of America as well.

President Obama. Let me start with Winston Churchill. [*Laughter*] You know, I don't know if people are aware of this, but in the Residence, on the second floor, my office, my private office is called the Treaty Room. And right outside the door of the Treaty Room, so that I see it every day—including on weekends, when I'm going into that office to watch a basketball game—[*laughter*]—the primary image I see is a bust of Winston Churchill. It's there voluntarily, because I can do anything on the second floor. [*Laughter*] I love Winston Churchill. I love the guy. [*Laughter*]

Now, when I was elected as President of the United States, my predecessor had kept a Churchill bust in the Oval Office. There are only so many tables where you can put busts; otherwise, it starts looking a little cluttered. [*Laughter*] And I thought it was appropriate, and I suspect most people here in the United Kingdom might agree, that as the first African American President, it might be appropriate to have a bust of Dr. Martin Luther King in my office to remind me of all the hard work of a lot of people who would somehow allow me to have the privilege of holding this office. That's just on Winston Churchill. I think people should know that, know my thinking there.

With respect to the special relationship, I have a staff member, who will not be named—because it might embarrass her a little bit—who, generally, on foreign trips, does not leave the hotel or the staff room because she's constantly doing work making this happen. She has had one request the entire time that I have been President, and that is, could she accompany me to Windsor on the off chance that she might get a peek at Her Majesty the Queen. And, gracious as she is, Her Majesty actually had this person, along with a couple of others, lined up so that as we emerged from lunch, they could say hello. And this staff person, who is as tough as they come, almost fainted and—[*laughter*]—which was—I'm glad she didn't because it would have caused an incident. [*Laughter*] That's the special relationship.

We are so bound together that nothing is going to impact the emotional and cultural and intellectual affinities between our two countries. So I don't come here suggesting in any way that that is impacted by a decision that the people of the United Kingdom may make around whether or not they're members of the European Union. That is there. That's solid. And that will continue, hopefully, eternally. And the cooperation in all sorts of ways—through NATO, through G–7, G–20—all those things will continue.

But, as David said, if one of our best friends is in an organization that enhances their influence and enhances their power and enhances their economy, then I want them to stay in it. Or at least I want to be able to tell them, you know, I think this makes you guys bigger players. I think this helps your economy. I think this helps to create jobs.

And so, ultimately, it's your decision. But precisely because we're bound at the hip, I want you to know that before you make your decision.

Margaret Brennan [CBS News].

United Kingdom-U.S. Travel/Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights in the U.S./Syria/Death of Musician Prince R. Nelson

Q. Thank you very much, sir. Mr. President, Vladimir Putin hasn't stopped Asad, as he led you to believe he would, and the cease-fire in Syria appears to be falling apart. Will you continue to bet on what looks to be a losing strategy?

Mr. Prime Minister, the U.K. today warned its citizens traveling to North Carolina and Mississippi about laws there that affect transgender individuals. As a friend, what do you think of those laws?

Mr. President, would you like to weigh in on that? And, sir, if you'd indulge us——

President Obama. Indulge—what do you mean?

Q. Well, indulge all of us back in the U.S., sir. Prince passed away. You were a fan. You

had invited him to perform at the White House. Can you tell us what made you a fan?

President Obama. I'm trying to figure out which order to do this. [*Laughter*] Maybe I'll start with North Carolina and Mississippi. I want everybody here in the United Kingdom to know that the people of North Carolina and Mississippi are wonderful people. They are hospitable people. They are beautiful States, and you are welcome and you should come and enjoy yourselves. And I think you'll be treated with extraordinary hospitality.

I also think that the laws that have been passed there are wrong and should be overturned. And they're in response to politics, in part; in part, some strong emotions that are generated by people, some of whom are good people, but I just disagree with when it comes to respecting the equal rights of all people, regardless of sexual orientation, whether they're transgender or gay or lesbian. And although I respect their different viewpoints, I think it's very important for us not to send signals that anybody is treated differently.

And I think it's fair to say that we're not unique among countries where—particularly under a federal system in which power is dispersed, that there are going to be some localities or local officials that put forward laws that aren't necessarily reflective of a national consensus. But if you guys come to North Carolina or Mississippi, everybody will be treated well.

The second question with respect to Syria, I am deeply concerned about the cessation of hostilities fraying and whether it's sustainable. Now, keep in mind that I have always been skeptical about Mr. Putin's actions and motives inside of Syria. He is—along with Iran—the preeminent backer of a murderous regime that I do not believe can regain legitimacy within his country because he's murdered a lot of people.

Having said that, what I also believe is, is that we cannot end the crisis in Syria without political negotiations and without getting all the parties around the table to craft a transition plan. And that, by necessity, means that there are going to be some people on one side of the table who I deeply disagree with and whose actions I deeply abhor. That's how oftentimes you resolve conflicts like this that are taking an enormous toll on the Syrian people.

The cessation of hostilities actually held longer than I expected. And for 7 weeks, we've seen a significant reduction in violence inside that country. And that gave some relief to people.

I talked to Putin on Monday precisely to reinforce to him the importance of us trying to maintain the cessation of hostilities, asking him to put more pressure on Asad, indicating to him that we would continue to try to get the moderate opposition to stay at the negotiating table in Geneva.

But this has always been hard. And it's going to keep being hard. And what David and I discussed in our meeting was that we will continue to prosecute the war against Daesh, against ISIL. We are going to continue to support those who are prepared to fight ISIL. And we're going to continue to target them. We're going to continue to make progress. But we're not going to solve the overall problem unless we can get this political track moving.

I assure you that we have looked at all options. None of them are great. And so we are going to play this option out. If in fact the cessation falls apart, we'll try to put it back together again even as we continue to go after ISIL. And it is in my belief—it's my belief that ultimately Russia will recognize that, just as this can't be solved by a military victory on the part of those we support, Russia may be able to keep the lid on, alongside Iran, for a while, but if you don't have a legitimate Government there, they will be bled as well. And that is not—that's not speculation on my part. I think the evidence all points in that direction.

And finally, with respect to Prince, I loved Prince because he put out great music and he was a great performer. I didn't know him well. He came to perform at the White House last year and was extraordinary and creative and original and full of energy. And so it's a remarkable loss.

And I'm staying at Winfield House, the U.S. Ambassador's residence. It so happens our Ambassador has a turntable, and so this

morning we played "Purple Rain" and "Delirious" just to get warmed up—[*laughter*]—before we left the house for important bilateral meetings like this. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Cameron. As a fan of great music, the Ambassador has brought a lot of brilliant talent.

President Obama. Absolutely.

Prime Minister Cameron. Let me just answer: I've been to North Carolina many years ago and enjoyed it. I have not yet made it to Mississippi, but one day I hope to. The guidance that we put out, the Foreign Office, gives advice on travel, and it obviously deals with laws in situations as they are, and it tries to give that advice dispassionately, impartially. But it's very important that it does so. And it's something that a lot of attention is given to.

Our view on any of these things is that we believe that we should be trying to use law to end discrimination rather than to embed it or enhance it. And that's something we're comfortable saying to countries and friends anywhere in the world. But obviously, the laws people pass is a matter for their own legislatures. But we make clear our own views about the importance of trying to end discrimination, and we've made some important steps forward in our own country on that front, which we're proud of.

With that——

President Obama. All good?

Prime Minister Cameron. Thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5 p.m. at 10 Downing Street. In his remarks, the President referred to Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom and her husband Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh; White House Deputy Chief of Staff Anita J. Decker Breckenridge; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom Matthew W. Barzun. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known as Daesh. Prime Minister Cameron referred to U.S. Secretary of State John F. Kerry. A reporter referred to Donald J. Trump, chairman and chief executive officer, Trump Organization, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate.

Statement on Armenian Remembrance Day
April 22, 2016

Today we solemnly reflect on the first mass atrocity of the 20th century, the Armenian Meds Yeghern, when one and a half million Armenian people were deported, massacred, and marched to their deaths in the final days of the Ottoman Empire.

As we honor the memory of those who suffered during the dark days beginning in 1915—and commit to learn from this tragedy so it may never be repeated—we also pay tribute to those who sought to come to their aid. One such individual was U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, Sr., who voiced alarm both within the U.S. Government and with Ottoman leaders in an attempt to halt the violence. Voices like Morgenthau's continue to be essential to the mission of atrocity prevention, and his legacy shaped the later work of human rights champions such as Raphael Lemkin, who helped bring about the first United Nations human rights treaty.

This is also a moment to acknowledge the remarkable resiliency of the Armenian people and their tremendous contributions both to the international community as well as to American society. We recall the thousands of Armenian refugees who decades ago began new lives in the United States, forming a community that has enormously advanced the vitality of this Nation and risen to prominence and distinction across a wide range of endeavors. At a moment of regional turmoil to Armenia's south, we also thank the people of Armenia for open-

ing their arms to Syrian refugees, welcoming nearly 17,000 into their country.

As we look from the past to the future, we continue to underscore the importance of historical remembrance as a tool of prevention, as we call for a full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the facts, which would serve the interests of all concerned. I have consistently stated my own view of what occurred in 1915, and my view has not changed. I have also seen that peoples and nations grow stronger and build a foundation for a more just and tolerant future by acknowledging and reckoning with painful elements of the past. We continue to welcome the expression of views by those who have sought to shed new light into the darkness of the past, from Turkish and Armenian historians to Pope Francis.

Today we stand with the Armenian people throughout the world in recalling the horror of the Meds Yeghern and reaffirm our ongoing commitment to a democratic, peaceful, and prosperous Armenia.

Statement on the Observance of Passover
April 22, 2016

Michelle and I send our best wishes to everyone celebrating Pesach in the United States, in the State of Israel, and around the world.

One of Passover's most powerful rituals is its tradition of storytelling: millions of Jewish families, friends, and even strangers sitting together and sharing the inspirational tale of the Exodus. Led by a prophet and chased by an army, sustained by a faith in God, and rewarded with deliverance, the Israelites' journey from bondage to the Promised Land remains one of history's greatest examples of emancipation. This story of redemption and hope, told and retold over thousands of years, has comforted countless Jewish families during times of oppression, echoing in rallying cries for civil rights around the world.

Mah nishtana halailah hazeh? For Michelle and me, this Passover is different from all other Passovers because it will mark our last Seder in the White House, a tradition we have looked forward to each year since hosting the first-ever White House Seder in 2009. We will join millions around the world to celebrate redemption at God's mighty hand and pray for those who still are denied their freedom. We dip the greens of renewal in saltwater to recall the tears of those imprisoned unjustly. As we count the Ten Plagues, we spill wine from our glasses to remember those who suffered and those who still do. And as we humbly sing *dayenu*, we are mindful that even the smallest blessings and slowest progress deserve our gratitude.

Passover gives us all a special opportunity to renew our belief in things unseen even as the future remains uncertain. May this season inspire us all to rededicate ourselves to peace and freedom for all of God's children. From our family to yours, *chag sameach*.

The President's Weekly Address
April 23, 2016

Hello, everybody. Today, there are some 2.2 million people behind bars in America. Millions more are on parole or probation. All told, we spend 80 billion taxpayer dollars each year to keep people locked up. Many are serving unnecessarily long sentences for nonviolent crimes. Almost 60 percent have mental health problems. Almost 70 percent were regular drug users. And as a whole, our prison population is disproportionately Black and Latino.

Now, plenty of people should be behind bars. But the reason we have so many more people in prison than any other developed country is not because we have more criminals. It's because we have criminal justice policies,

including unfair sentencing laws, that need to be reformed.

We know that simply locking people up doesn't make communities safer. It doesn't deal with the conditions that lead people to criminal activity in the first place or to return to prison later. After all, there's evidence that a 10-percent increase in the high school graduation rate leads to a nearly 10-percent decrease in arrest rates. A 10-percent wage increase for men without a college degree lowers crime by as much as 20 percent. And a growing body of research suggests that the longer people stay in jail, the more likely they are to commit another crime once they get out.

Here's why this matters. Every year, more than 600,000 people are released from prison. We need to ensure that they are prepared to reenter society and become productive, contributing members of their families and communities and maybe even role models.

That's why we've been working to make our criminal justice system smarter, fairer, less expensive, and more effective. This week, the Department of Justice will highlight how strong reentry programs can make communities safer. My administration will announce new actions that will build on the progress we've already made. We'll release more details about how we are taking steps to ensure that applicants with a criminal history have a fair shot to compete for a Federal job. We're issuing a new report that details the economic costs of our high rates of incarceration. And we're calling on businesses to commit to hiring returning citizens who have earned a second chance.

These are just a few of the steps we're taking. But there's much more to do: disrupting the pipeline from underfunded schools to overcrowded jails; addressing the disparities in the application of criminal justice, from arrest rates to sentencing to incarceration; investing in alternatives to prison, like drug courts and mental health treatment; helping those who have served their time get the support they need to become productive members of society.

Good people from both sides of the aisle and across all sectors are coming together on this issue. From businesses that are changing their hiring practices to law enforcement that's improving community policing, we're seeing change. Now we need a Congress that's willing to send a bipartisan criminal justice reform bill to my desk. This isn't just about what makes economic and practical sense. It's about making sure that we live up to our ideals as a nation.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:35 a.m. on April 15 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on April 23. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 22, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 23. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Young Leaders of the United Kingdom Town Hall Meeting in London, United Kingdom
April 23, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello! Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Have a seat. Have a seat. Well, hello, London. It is good to be back in the U.K. Thank you, Khadija, for that wonderful introduction. She—I was saying backstage, I'd vote for her for something. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank our U.S. Ambassador, Matthew Barzun, for all the great work that he's doing.

And it is wonderful to see all of you. I guess you all know why I came this week. It's no secret. Nothing was going to stop me from wishing happy birthday to Her Majesty. [*Laughter*] And meeting George. [*Laughter*] Who was adorable. [*Laughter*] Michelle and I had the privilege to visit with Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh yesterday. I can't tell you what we talked about. I can tell you that I hope

I am such a engaging lunch partner when I am 90. [*Laughter*] And I'd like to thank Her Majesty for letting us use one of her Horticultural Halls for this town hall.

I also just came from touring Shakespeare's Globe, which is a good way to start your Saturday morning. Today is the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. And as he once wrote, "Brevity is the soul of wit," so I will try to be brief on the front end so we have time for a conversation.

These are some of the favorite things that I do when I travel around the world, is just have a chance to meet with young people and hear from them directly. It's inspiring to me. It gives me new ideas and, I think, underscores the degree to which young people are rising up in every continent to seize the possibilities of tomorrow.

Now, whenever I get together with leaders of the United States and U.K., you hear a lot about the special relationship and the shared values and interests that bind us together and the way that our cooperation makes the world safer and more secure and a more just and prosperous place. And all of that is true. We go back a pretty long way, the U.K. and the U.S. We've had our quarrels. There was that whole tea incident and—[*laughter*]—the British burned my house down. [*Laughter*] But we made up. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. It was for the tea.

The President. It was for the tea. [*Laughter*]

Ultimately, we made up and ended up spilling blood on the battlefield together, side by side, against fascism and against tyranny, for freedom and for democracy. And from the ashes of war, we led the charge to create the institutions and initiatives that sustained a prosperous peace: NATO, Bretton Woods, the Marshall Plan, the EU. The joint efforts and sacrifices of previous generations of Americans and Brits are a big part of why we've known decades of relative peace and prosperity in Europe, and that, in turn, has helped to spread peace and prosperity around the world.

And think about how extraordinary that is. For more than 1,000 years, this continent was darkened by war and violence. It was taken for granted. It was assumed that that was the fate of man. Now, that's not to say that your generation has had it easy. Both here and the United States, your generation has grown up at a time of breathtaking change. You've come of age through 9/11 and 7/7. You've had friends go off to war. You've seen families endure recession. The challenges of our time—economic inequality and climate change, terrorism and migration—all these things are real. And in an age of instant information, where TV and Twitter can feed us a steady stream of bad news, I know that it can sometimes seem like the order that we've created is fragile, maybe even crumbling; maybe the center cannot hold.

And we see new calls for isolationism or xenophobia. We see those who would call for rolling back the rights of people; people hunkering down in their own point of view and unwilling to engage in a democratic debate. And those impulses I think we can understand. They are reactions to changing times and uncertainty.

But when I speak to young people, I implore them and I implore you to reject those calls to pull back. I'm here to ask you to reject the notion that we're gripped by forces that we can't control. And I want you to take a longer and more optimistic view of history and the part that you can play in it. I ask you to embrace the view of one of my predecessors, President John F. Kennedy, who once said: "Our problems are man made. Therefore, they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants."

That's how, since 1950, the global average life expectancy has grown by 25 years. Since 1990, we've cut extreme poverty around the world in half. That's how, over the past hundred years, we've come from a world where only a small fraction of women could vote to one where almost every woman can. That's how, since just the year 2000, we've come from a world without marriage equality to one where it's a reality in nearly two dozen countries, including here and in the United States.

Every few months, I speak with a new group of White House interns. They're roughly your age. They come in for 6 months; they are assigned to various aspects of the White House.

And I often talk to them about the fact that if you could choose one moment in history in which to be born, and you didn't know ahead of time what you were to be—you didn't know whether you were a man or a woman, what nationality, what ethnicity, what religion, who your parents were, what class status you might have—if you could choose one time in history where the chances that you led a fulfilling life were most promising, you'd choose right now, this moment. Because the world, for all of its travails, for all of its challenges, has never been healthier, better educated, wealthier, more tolerant, less violent, more attentive to the rights of all people than it is today.

Now, that doesn't mean we don't have big problems. That's not a cause for complacency, but it is a cause for optimism. You are standing at a moment where your capacity to shape this world is unmatched. What an incredible privilege that is. And you've never had better tools to make a difference, to forge a better U.K. and a better Europe and a better world.

So my primary message today is going to be to reject pessimism and cynicism; know that progress is possible, that our problems can be solved. Progress requires the harder path of breaking down barriers and building bridges and standing up for the values of tolerance and diversity that our nations have worked and sacrificed to secure and defend. Progress is not inevitable, and it requires struggle and perseverance and discipline and faith. But that's the story of how we won voting rights and women's rights and workers' rights and civil rights and immigration rights and gay rights: because of those who came before us, often risked their lives to give us the chance to know something better.

That's what gives me so much hope about your generation. So many of you are driven by that same impulse. You are a generation that has seen integration and globalization not as threats but as opportunities—for education and exploration and employment and exchange. You're a generation who sees differences of pluralism and diversity not as a curse, but as a great gift.

And that's one of the reasons why the United States has invested in young leader initiatives around the globe: in Africa and Latin America, Southeast Asia, and right here in the U.K.

So last summer, we launched Young Leaders U.K. And it's grown from four students in Plymouth to more than 1,000 nationwide, a diverse group of Brits aged 18 to 30, from government and NGOs and the private sector, including many of you here today. I know Ambassador Barzun has held town hall workshops at more than 100 high schools, with more than 14,000 sixth-formers. He's worked to create more of the U.S. Embassy exchange programs that have graduated alumni like Margaret Thatcher and Gordon Brown and Tony Blair. Because we want you to have the tools, connections, and resources that you need to make yourselves change agents, the change that you are looking for in the world.

So you're young leaders like Michael Sani, who's here today—where is Michael?

Bite the Ballot Founder Michael Sani. Behind, sir.

The President. Right behind. [*Laughter*] There he is. Michael was inspired by America's "Rock the Vote" voter registration initiative, so he started his own "Bite the Bullet"—"Bite the Ballot"—excuse me—[*laughter*]—initiative here in the U.K. And he spent time in Greensboro, North Carolina, where he learned about our civil rights movement. And he said: "I have a new understanding of the meaning of perseverance, resilience, and delayed gratification—about fighting for change you may not live to see, but your children will live to see."

Fighting for change that you may not live to see, but your children will live to see. That's what this is all about. That's what we are all about. Whether in the cold war or world war, movements for economic or social justice, efforts to combat climate change, our best impulses has always been to leave a better world for the next generation.

Maryam Ahmed is here today. Where is Maryam? Where are you? Are you also behind me? [*Laughter*] There's Maryam up top. It's that impulse that compels a young leader like Maryam to say, I may have grown up one of

eight in a small West London house, but I'm going to use the education I got at Oxford to help any child have the same opportunities that I have.

And Ali Hashem is here. Where is Ali? Right there. It's the same impulse that's led Ali to say, I may have fled Syria as a child, but now that I'm in elective office, I'm going to use my power to help other refugees like me.

And Becca Bunce is here today. Where is Becca? There's Becca. It's that impulse that compels a young leader like Becca to say that, as a woman with a disability, I may have fallen down at times, but people who believed in me picked me up. And I'm going to pay it forward by fighting for people with disabilities and against violence against women, because I believe the world can be a better place.

You can't help but be inspired by the stories of young people like these, both in the United States and the United Kingdom. And think of all the good that we can do together. Think of all the good that we have yet to accomplish. There is not a challenge on this planet that our two countries don't take on together. And as long as your generation nurtures that special relationship and learns from one another and stands together, I'm confident the future is brighter than the past and that our best days are still ahead of us.

So with that, let's have a conversation. All right, well, you guys were ready, I guess. [*Laughter*] Here's what we're going to do. I am going to go boy, girl, boy, girl—[*laughter*]—to make sure that it's fair. And I'll try to get as many questions as I can. Introduce yourself. We have mikes. Right there. And tell me who you are and where you're from and then try to keep your question or comment relatively brief so I can get as many as possible. All right?

And we will start right here.

Northern Ireland/Peace and Reconciliation Efforts

Q. Mr. President, my name is Keona McCarney from Belfast, Northern Ireland. And the special relationship is felt nowhere stronger than in Northern Ireland, where America has played a really important role in our peace process. How will your predecessor and those to come after you help to foster that?

The President. Well, in Northern Ireland is a story of perseverance. And the fact that your generation—how old are you now?

Q. Twenty-one.

The President. Twenty-one. I mean, your experience has been entirely different than your parents'. There are still huge problems there, some of them political, some of them economic. But every year, we have, on St. Patrick's Day, folks from Ireland come. And we had both the—your First Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister come. And folks are working these issues through.

And what's interesting is the degree to which the example of peacemaking in Northern Ireland is now inspiring others. So, in Colombia, Latin America right now, they're trying to undergo a peace process. And they've actually brought people from Northern Ireland to come and describe how do you overcome years of enmity and hatred and intolerance and try to shape a country that is unified.

You know this better than I do, but one of the things that you see in Northern Ireland that's most important is the very simple act of recognizing the humanity of those on the other side of the argument, having empathy and a sense of connection to people who are not like you. That's taken time, but you're now seeing that. And I think among young people who are interacting more, you're seeing that.

It requires also forging a new identity that is about being from Northern Ireland as opposed to being Unionist or Sinn Fein or—and just deciding the country as a whole is more important than any particular faction or any particular flag.

But this is a challenging time to do that. Because there is so much uncertainty in the world right now, because things are changing so fast, there is a temptation to forge identities, tribal identities that give you a sense of certainty, a buffer against change. And that's something that our young people—we have to fight against. Whether you're talking about Africa or the Middle East or Northern Ireland or Burma, the forces that lead to the most violence

and the most injustice typically spring out of people saying, I want to feel important by dividing the world into "us" and "them." And "them" threatens me, and so I've got to make sure that my tribe strikes out first.

And fighting that mentality and that impulse requires us to begin very young, with our kids. One of the most encouraging things I've seen in Northern Ireland is children starting to go to school together. Right? And having a sense of—that we're all in this together, as opposed to, it's "us" against "them."

But it's going to take some time. It will depend on leaders like you to make it happen, all right? No pressure. You're going to be fine. [*Laughter*] You're going to do it. All right, good question.

All right, it's a gentleman's turn. That gentleman right there. Yes, you. No, yes—there's nobody behind you, right there. No, no, no. [*Laughter*] You. Hold on a second. I was pointing down here——

Q. Oh, right.

The President. ——but go ahead, and I'll call on him next. Go ahead.

Counterterrorism Strategy/Iran/Global Economic Development/Education

Q. Hi, I'm Peter from London.

The President. Hi, Peter.

Q. I—thank you. [*Laughter*] So I always imagine in the future, so if your successor comes to you and she says, so—[*laughter*]—suppose it could be Bernie. [*Laughter*] And she says, oh, we need to prioritize education, health care, and defense. These are three issues we've got; we've got a limited budget. And what's your priority, and how do you think about ranking those? And what do you think—what would you like to see as your core priorities there?

The President. For the next President?

Q. And ongoing, and for yourself as well. But, yes, so——

The President. Well, one of the things that I've learned as President is, I don't always have the luxury of just choosing one or two things. Turns out that how well we do in the United States and how well the globe does depends on a lot of things.

My first priority is to keep the American people safe. Just like I'm sure Prime Minister Cameron, if you asked him, "What is your first priority?" it's keeping the United Kingdom safe. So security is always going to be a top-of-the-list item.

And the threats from ISIL and transnational terrorism are absolutely critical to address. But how we address them is important. And recognizing that security is not just a matter of military actions, but is a matter of the messages we send and the institutions that we build and the diplomacy that we engage in and the opportunities that we present to people. That is going to be important for the next President of the United States and any global leader to recognize.

I mean, I am in awe of our respective militaries, the men and women in uniform who serve their country and make such extraordinary sacrifices. But we do them a disservice if we think that the entire burden of keeping the world safe is just placed on those who are in uniform. That's where diplomacy comes in.

You look at something like Iran, where obviously, the United States and Iran has had a terrible relationship since 1979; the theocracy there has engaged in all kinds of very dangerous and provocative behaviors, and they were on the path to obtain a nuclear weapon. The hard, diplomatic work that we did, along with the U.K. and the EU and members of the Security Council, to forge an agreement where they are no longer on the path to get a nuclear weapon—we never engaged in a military strike to do it, but it resulted in a much safer world.

And the same is true when you think about development in sub-Saharan Africa. An organization like Boko Haram is ideologically driven, and we have to help countries like Nigeria fight against the brutality and the rape and the pillage that they engage in. But if there are communities where children can't read or feed themselves, they are much more vulnerable to fostering these kinds of demented ideologies.

So I think it's not an either-or question, and I—and it's important for young people who—

very many thoughtful young people, I think, instinctually are suspicious of military action because too often it's been used as a knee-jerk response to problems as opposed to part of a broader set of solutions. But we have to do both, and we can do both.

In terms of the United States right now, I would love to see a focus on early childhood education as a—as the next step in filling out our social safety net. We don't yet have institutions that are fully adapted to the fact that, guess what, women work and support families, and they need things like paid family leave and high-quality childcare. And we know that when we invest in children between the ages of zero and 3 that the outcomes in terms of them getting effective educations and having thriving lives are enormous. We ended up saving huge amounts of money from reduced crime and poverty, if we just make that early investment. That's something that some countries do better than others, and we can learn from other countries along those lines.

Across the board, across the developing world right now, I think we have to attend to issues of inequality. And to do—one of the places to start addressing these issues of inequality is making sure that every child is getting a decent education. And a lot of our countries are not doing as well as they should on that front.

So, all right, who is next? All right. Young lady right there. Right—you, yes, you. [*Laughter*]

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership/Trans-Pacific Partnership/Vietnam

Q. Hi, my name is Fatima, and my question is, do you think signing the T–TIP agreement will have a negative impact on the EU, due to the standards of regulation enforced?

The President. For those of you who are not aware, T–TIP, as we call it, is the trade deal that is being negotiated between the United States and the European Union. We're—we haven't gotten it done yet. The truth is, is that the United States and Europe already have enormous amounts of trade, but there are still barriers that exist that prevent businesses and individuals that are providing services to each other to be able to do so seamlessly. And if we are able to get this deal done, it's estimated that it will create millions of jobs and billions of dollars of benefits on both sides of the Atlantic.

But getting trade deals done is tough, because each country has its own parochial interests and factions. And in order to get a trade deal done, each country has to give something up. So it's a time-consuming process. And people, right now, are especially suspicious of trade deals because trade deals feel as if they are accelerating some of these globalizing trends that have weakened labor unions and allowed for jobs to be shipped to low-wage countries. And some of the criticism in the past of trade deals are legitimate. Sometimes, they have served the interests of large corporations and not necessarily of workers in the countries that participate in them.

But we've just gone through this exercise between the United States and Asia, where we organized a large regional trade deal with 11 countries, and part of the argument that I'm making in the United States is that the answer to globalization and income inequality and lack of wage growth is not to try to pull up the drawbridge and shut off trade. The idea is to make sure that in these trade deals we are embedding standards and values that help lift workers' rights and help lift environmental standards and help fight against things like human trafficking and child labor. And our values should be embedded in how countries trade with each other.

So, for example, Vietnam was one of the countries that is part of this Trans-Pacific Partnership, and we said to Vietnam, if you want access to our markets—we understand you have a different political system than us, but if workers have no rights and there's no possibility of organizing labor unions, we're not going to let you sell a bunch of sneakers and T-shirts into our country because by definition you're going to be undercutting the standards of living of folks in our country. And so for the first time, the Government of Vietnam has started to change its laws to recognize labor unions. Now, they're still suppressed. Those standards are not where they are in the United States or

the U.K. But it gives us a lever by which to begin to raise standards all around the world.

Now, that's less of an issue between the United States and Europe. Main thing between the United States and Europe is trying to just break down some of the regulatory differences that make it difficult to do business back and forth. Plus, making sure those light sockets are all matched up. [*Laughter*] I mean, those light sockets are really irritating. [*Laughter*]

Let's see. Oh, I promised I was going to call on this gentleman back here. Yes, sir. No, no, right here. You keep passing by this poor guy. [*Laughter*]

The President's Achievements/Civil Rights/Social Change

Q. My name is Elijah—[*inaudible*]—and I'm from London. After 8 years, what would you say you want your legacy to be?

The President. Well, I mean I have—I still have a few more months, so—[*laughter*]. I—[*applause*]—no, no, no, that's—actually, 8 months and 52 days or—not that I'm counting. [*Laughter*] I just made that up, I actually don't know. [*Laughter*] It's roughly something like that.

Yes, it's interesting, when you're in the job, you're not thinking on a day-to-day basis about your legacy, you're thinking about how do I get done what I'm trying to get done right now. And I don't think that I'll have a good sense of my legacy until 10 years from now, and I can look back with some perspective and get a sense of what worked and what didn't.

There are things I'm proud of. The basic principle that in a country as wealthy as the United States, every person should have access to high-quality health care that they can afford, that's something I'm proud of, I believe in. Saving the world economy from a Great Depression, that was pretty good. [*Laughter*]

The first time I came to London was April of 2009, and the world economy was in a free fall, in part because of the reckless behavior of folks on Wall Street, and—but in part because of reckless behavior of a lot of financial institutions around the globe. For us to be able to mobilize the world community to take rapid action to stabilize the financial markets, and then in the United States, to pass Wall Street reforms that make it much less likely that a crisis like that can happen again, I'm proud of that.

I think on the international stage, the work that we did to get the possible nuclear weapons that Iran was developing out of Iran, and doing so without going to war, is something I'm very proud of.

There are things that people don't pay a lot of attention to now, but the response to the Ebola crisis: For about 3 weeks, everybody sure—was sure that everybody was going to die—we're all going to get Ebola, we're all going to die. [*Laughter*] And there was sort of hysteria about it. And then, everybody forgot about it. And the reason everybody forgot about it was because we mounted what was probably one of the most effective, if not the most effective, international public health responses in the history of the world and saved hundreds of thousands of lives.

So I don't know, I'll look at a scorecard at the end. [*Laughter*] And I'm proud about the fact that I think that I have been true to myself during this process. I don't—sometimes, I look back at what I said when I was running for office and what I'm saying today, and they match up. So there's, I think, a certain core integrity to what I've been trying to do. We've had failures, and we've—occasionally, we've been blocked, but this goes back to one of the themes of my opening statement, and it's important for all the young people here to remember: Change takes time, and oftentimes, what you start has to then be picked up by your successors or the next generation.

If you think about the gap between—well, something I'm most familiar with, the American civil rights movement. You had abolitionists in the 1700s who were fighting against slavery and for a hundred years built a movement that eventually led to a Civil War and the amendments to our Constitution that ended slavery and called for equal protection under the law. It then took another hundred years for those rights that had been enshrined in the Constitution to actually be affirmed through

the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. And then it's taken another 50 years to try to make sure that those rights are realized. And they're still not fully realized. Well, there's still discrimination in aspects of American life, even with a Black President.

And in fact, one of the dangers has been that by electing a Black President, people have then said, well, there must be no problems at all. And obviously, you see Ferguson and some of the issues that we've seen in the criminal justice system indicating the degree to which that was always false.

So does that mean all the work that was done along the way was worthless? No, of course not. But it does mean that if any of you begin to work on an issue that you care deeply about, don't be disappointed if a year out, things haven't been completely solved. Don't give up and succumb to cynicism if, after 5 years, poverty has not been eradicated and prejudice is still out there somewhere and we haven't resolved all of the steps we need to take to reverse climate change. It's okay.

Dr. King said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." And it doesn't bend on its own. It bends because we pull it in that direction. But it requires a series of generations working and building off of what the previous one has done.

And so, as President, I think about it in those ways. I consider myself a runner, and I run my leg of the race. But then, I've got a baton, and I'm passing it on to the next person. And hopefully, they're running in the right direction—[*laughter*]—as opposed to the wrong direction. [*Laughter*] And hopefully, they don't drop the baton. And then, they go, and then they pass it on to somebody else. Right? And that's how I think you've got to think about change generally. Okay.

All right. It is a young woman's turn. Yes, right here, in the red. Yes, you. No, no, that's you. You're wearing red. Yes. [*Laughter*]

Same-Sex Marriage/Black Lives Matter Movement/Political Activism/Climate Change

Q. Thanks. Hi, I'm Louisa. I'm a climate change campaigner, and I wanted to thank you for your smart and creative way to try and sort of get a grip on the problem.

The President. Yes.

Q. And given you've been talking about the value of social movements, I was wondering which campaigns have made you change your mind while you've been in office and inspired you to do things and where you think we need more external pressure from campaigns to create meaningful change.

The President. Well, that's an interesting question. And are you talking about climate change, in particular? Or are you talking about just generally, on a whole spectrum of issues? That's interesting. It's interesting because I started as a community organizer trying to pressure politicians into getting things done. And then—now I'm on the other side—[*laughter*]—and so what has worked and what hasn't?

Well, in the United States, what's been remarkable is the rapidity with which the marriage equality movement changed the political landscape and hearts and minds and resulted in actual changes in law. It's probably been the fastest set of changes that—in terms of a social movement that I've seen.

On issues of LGBT rights generally, I didn't need a lot of pressure. I came in working on ending a policy called "don't ask, don't tell," that was preventing LGBT citizens from serving in our military openly. We did that very systematically. Policies in terms of those who had HIV/AIDS being able to emigrate to our country, hospital visitations—there were a whole host of things that we were already doing.

But on marriage equality, I was in favor of what's called civil unions. My notion was initially that labeling those partnerships as marriage wasn't necessary as long as people were getting the same rights, and it would disentangle them from some of the religious connotations that marriage had in the minds of a lot of Americans. And that's where I think—now, I have to confess, my children generally had an impact on me. People I loved who were in monogamous same-sex relationships explained to me what I should have understood earlier, which is, it was not simply about legal rights, but about a sense of stigma, that if you're

calling it something different, it means that somehow it means less in the eyes of society.

I believe that the manner in which the LGBT community described marriage equality as not some radical thing, but actually reached out to people who said they care about family values, and said, if you care about everything that families provide—stability and commitment and partnership and—then this is actually a pretty conservative position to take, that you should be in favor of this. I thought there was a lot of smarts in reaching out and building and framing the issue in a way that could bring in people who initially didn't agree with them.

As a general rule, I think that what, for example, Black Lives Matter is doing now to bring attention to the problem of a criminal justice system that sometimes is not treating people fairly based on race or reacting to shootings of individuals by police officers has been really effective in bringing attention to problems.

One of the things I caution young people about, though, that I don't think is effective is, once you've highlighted an issue and brought it to people's attention and shined a spotlight, and elected officials or people who are in a position to start bringing about change are ready to sit down with you, then you can't just keep on yelling at them. And you can't refuse to meet because that might compromise the purity of your position.

The value of social movements and activism is to get you at the table, get you in the room, and then to start trying to figure out how is this problem going to be solved. You, then, have a responsibility to prepare an agenda that is achievable, that can institutionalizes the changes you seek, and to engage the other side and occasionally to take half a loaf that will advance the gains that you seek, understanding that there's going to be more work to do, but this is what is achievable at this moment.

And too often, what I see is wonderful activism that highlights a problem, but then people feel so passionately and are so invested in the purity of their position that they never take that next step and say, okay, well, now I've got to sit down and try to actually get something done.

So the Paris Agreement that we just negotiated and that a number of countries just signed yesterday on Earth Day, the agreement we shaped is not going to, by itself, solve climate change. The science argues that the world is going to be—going to need to do a lot more in order for us to prevent catastrophic climate change. But my strategy from the start has been, all right, if I can get the Chinese to agree with us, as the two largest emitters, that we have to do something, and lock in China with us for the first time to take some serious steps around reducing carbon emissions, and if by getting the two largest emitters, I can now leverage all the other smaller countries to also put in their own targets for emissions, and if we can set up an architecture that recognizes the need for carbon reduction and has—and can allow people to—or allow countries to hold each other accountable, then that's a start. And we can now start turning up the dial as our science and our understanding improves, as technology improves, so that poor countries don't feel that they have to choose between development and carbon reductions. And there are all kinds of compromises in that. But it's a start.

Now, there are some climate activists who, after the Paris Agreement was signed, said, ah, this is not enough! But they're not in a conversation, apparently, with Prime Minister Modi of India, for example, who's thinking, I've still got several hundred million people without electricity, and I have some obligation to try to relieve them of their poverty and suffering, so I've got to balance those equities against the imperatives of the planet as a whole.

And so—now, but the good news is, is that most of the groups that have been involved in this process have been pretty sophisticated. But that's a general principle that I think all of you should consider. Make noise and occasionally you can act a little crazy to get attention, to shine a spotlight on the issue, to highlight it. But once people who are in power and in a position to actually do something about it are prepared to meet and listen with you, do your homework, be prepared, present a plausible

set of actions, and negotiate and be prepared to move the ball down the field even if it doesn't get all the way there. All right?

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. No. You do, but it wouldn't be fair if you just start yelling out a question and I—because it's a guy's turn also, so you—[*laughter*].

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. The—all right, go ahead. And——

Somalia

Q. Thank you, President, firstly, for all you did for the world and for mankind. I think you made a great contribution, and you inspire a lot of young people across the world. But my question is slightly—on East Africa.

The President. Okay.

Q. Since you said, and—you can ask me any question. Just last week, 400 young boys has died in the Mediterranean Sea in trying to seek a better life. Mostly left in Somalia. And those young boys has lost their livelihoods. Since, there is a international ships coming to the Somali territorial water, and those ships has been trying to protect the international ships from the piracy. But at the same time, they have been dumping, there has been a lot of proven cases that they have been dumping a waste in Somali Sea. And also there is a proven cases within the coast cities that children are dying with very strange diseases that they've never seen, that is these things are coming to the coast that came out from the sea.

So today I have the opportunity to ask you, while you're here for the next 8 or 9 months that you have, can you kindly use your leverage within the international arena to galvanize the international community to look at this issue? And can you share some practical steps that you can share—that you can take to ensure this doesn't happen.

The President. Well, I'll be honest with you. I'm not fully familiar with some of the issues you referred to. I'm certainly familiar with the challenges that Somalia has been going through. And we've been working aggressively to try to help Mogadishu develop a functioning state that can protect its people and that can get an economy moving that gives young people opportunity.

I'm certainly familiar with the issues of privacy—of piracy and the international concerns that led to many of these ships patrolling these areas. I'm less familiar with some of the issues that you discussed. So what I'll do is, after this meeting, as we're shaking hands, I'll try to get some additional information from you. One of the things I've learned as President is, although you can always fake your way through an answer, sometimes, it's really good just to say, you know what, I don't know all the answers on this one. So I will—I'll find out more about the specifics that you're talking about.

All right. I will, I—see, now since you've raised your hand and you didn't continue to act crazy, I'm going to go ahead and call on you. Go ahead. [*Laughter*]

Q. First of all, sincerest apologies.

The President. That's okay.

Q. I guess I got overwhelmed.

The President. You got excited.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights

Q. My name is Maria Munir. And you've been speaking a lot about how we have to become the change that we want to see.

The President. Right.

Q. And you've spoken about progress, about human rights, and about how we in the U.S. and the U.K. need to lead in terms of civil rights movements and LGBTQ issues. Now I'm about to do something terrifying, which is I'm coming out to you as a nonbinary person, which means that I don't fit within—I'm getting emotional, I'm so sorry.

The President. That's okay.

Q. Because I come from a—I'm from a Pakistani Muslim background, which inevitably has cultural implications. And I know that in North Carolina, recently, with the bathroom bill, people are being forced, obviously, to produce birth certificates to prove their gender in order to go to a toilet. In the U.K., we don't recognize nonbinary people under the Equality Act, so we literally have no rights. So if there was any discrimination, there's nothing we can do.

I've been working for the last 9 months with the U.K. Civil Service Fast Stream with Gillian Smith in order to do what I can, even though I'm still at university and running for local election at the same time in Watford. I've managed to get them to respect pronouns. I've managed to get them to commit to gender-neutral toilets. And these are thing I've done as a student. And I really, really wish that yourself and David Cameron would take us seriously as transgender people. And perhaps you could elucidate as to what you can do to go beyond what has been accepted as the LGBTQ rights movement, in including people who fit outside the social norms.

The President. Well, look, I think that—[*applause*]. First of all, that wasn't that crazy. I thought you were going to ask to come up here and dance with me or something. [*Laughter*] But, I mean, look, I'm incredibly proud of the steps it sounds like you've already taken to speak out about your own experience and then to try to create a social movement and change laws. It sounds to me like you're on the right track.

I can't speak for David Cameron, although I will say that on LGBT issues, I think David's been ahead of the curve relative to a lot of other leaders around the world and even here in the U.K. I can say from my perspective that we're taking a lot of serious steps to address these issues within the Federal Government.

The challenge we've had is, North Carolina, the law that comes up, for example, that's a State law. And because of our system of government, I can't overturn, on my own, State laws unless a Federal law is passed that prohibits States from doing these things. And with the Congress I currently have, that's not likely to happen. [*Laughter*]

But we're doing a lot of work administratively. And as I said, you should feel encouraged just by virtue of the fact that I think social attitudes on this issue have changed faster than I've seen on any other issue. It won't—it doesn't feel fast enough for you or for those who are impacted. And that's good. You shouldn't feel satisfied. You should keep pushing. But I think the trend lines are good on this. We're moving in the right direction and, in part, because of courageous and active young people like yourself. So stick with it.

All right. Let's see. Gentleman in the green here.

Political Compromise

Q. Thank you much. I'm Alex Clements from Manchester. I agree with everything you've said so far about compromise. But in an age of polarized politics, how do you inspire people to commit to compromise and fighting for the middle ground?

The President. I think that's a great question. It's something that I wrestle with. I would distinguish between compromising on principles and compromising in getting things done in the here and now. And what I mean by that is, I am uncompromising on the notion that every person, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, has a dignity and worth and have to be treated equally. So I'm uncompromising in that basic principle.

And I'm also of the belief that in order to realize that principle, every child has to have true opportunity; that every child is deserving of a decent education and decent health care and the ability to go to college and—so that they can make of themselves what they will. So that's a powerful principle in me. That drives my politics.

But if I'm sitting with Congress, and I have the opportunity to get half a million more kids into an early childhood education program, even though I know that that will leave 2 million who need it out of the program, but the alternative is none, I'll take half a million, right? And I can wake—I can look at myself in the mirror and feel good about the 500,000 that I'm helping, knowing that the next round of budget negotiations that we have, I'm going to go for another half a million, and I'm going to go for another half a million after that.

So I think it's important for everyone to understand that you—you'd have to be principled, you have to have a north star, a moral compass. There should be a reason for you getting involved in social issues other than vanity or just trying to mix and mingle and meet cute

people of—[*laughter*]—that you're interested in—although that's not a bad reason for—[*laughter*]. But you have to recognize that, particularly in pluralistic societies and democratic governments like we have in the United States and the U.K., there are people who disagree with us. They have different perspectives. They come from different points of view. And they're not bad people just because they disagree with us. They may, in fact, assert that they've got similar principles to ours, but they just disagree with us on the means to vindicate those principles.

And you are absolutely right that we are in this age now—partly because of what's happened with our media—in which people from different political parties, different political orientations, can spend the bulk of their day only talking to and listening to and hearing the perspectives of people who already agree with them. I know less about the U.K. media, but in the United States, it used to be, we had three television stations. And people might complain about the dominance of these three television stations, but there was one virtue to them, which was, everybody was kind of watching the same thing and had the same understanding of what the facts were on any given issue. And today, you have what, 500 television stations, and the Internet will give you a thousand different sources of information. And so what's increasingly happening in the United States is, is that if you're a conservative, then you're watching Fox News or you're reading a conservative blogpost. If you're a liberal, then you're reading the Huffington Post or reading the New York Times. And there's this massive divergence that's taking place in terms of just what the agreed-upon facts and assumptions are that we're talking about. And that does make it harder to compromise.

And there have been some interesting studies that have been done showing that if you spend time with people who just agree with you on any particular issue, that you become even more extreme in your convictions because you're never contradicted and everybody just mutually reinforces their perspective. That's why I think it is so important for all the young people here to seek out people who don't agree with you. That will teach you to compromise. It will also help you, by the way, if you decide to get married. [*Laughter*]

So—but the most important thing is understanding that compromise does not mean surrendering what you believe, it just means that you are recognizing the truth, the fact that these other people who disagree with you or this other political party or this other nation, they have—that they have dignity too, that they have worth as well, and you have to hear them and see them. And sometimes, we don't. We just——

All right, how much time do I have, by the way, people? One more question? I'll make it two. [*Laughter*] I'll make it two. All right. Let's see. Let's see. [*Laughter*] All right, well, this young lady right there. Go ahead.

Q. Good morning, Mr. President.

The President. Good morning.

Q. I'm losing my voice, so I apologize.

The President. That's okay.

Leadership

Q. My name is Helen Vaughan-Evans, and my question for you is, what leadership skills have you found yourself relying on most during your time in office, and why?

The President. A thick skin—[*laughter*]—is very helpful. I was just talking about this, actually, with the Ambassador, wasn't I, last night? Where is Matthew? I think I was just talking about this. Yes, I think I was just talking—we were just talking about this.

Two things I'm pretty good at. I mean—well, let me say this. One of the things that happens as you get older is, you are, hopefully, more aware of and honest with yourself about what your strengths are and what your weaknesses are. I could list my weaknesses, but you asked me about what things I've found useful—[*laughter*]—so I'll skip over that.

Two things I'm pretty good at: One is attracting talent. And anybody who wants to be a leader, I would advise you to spend a lot of time thinking about, how am I helping other people do great things? Because, as President of the United States, I am dealing with so

many issues, and I can't be expert on everything, and I can't be everywhere. And the one thing I can do is assemble a team of people who are really good and really smart and really committed and care about their mission and have integrity and then give them the tools or get rid of the barriers or help coach them so that they can do a great job.

And I think leaders who think that their primary job is to make everybody do exactly what they want, as opposed to helping to organize really talented people to collectively go to where we need to go, typically stumble. You should be predisposed to other people's power: How can I make the people around me do great things? If they do, then, by definition, I'll succeed, because that's my job, is to get this team moving in the right direction.

So that's one. Second thing, I'm pretty good at setting a course, a general direction, and being able to, hopefully, unify that team around that general direction. Oftentimes, I have to rely on other people to implement and execute to get there, but setting a direction requires also listening to what is it that's important to people.

And the third thing is synthesizing. I think it's very useful as a leader to be able to—particularly on complex issues—to sit around a table and hear a lot of different points of view and be able to get to what's the nub of the issue, what's the heart of the problem, what's the essential conflict that we're trying to resolve, and get everybody to see the problem the same—see what the problem is.

Because I see a lot of organizations that spend a lot of time doing a lot of work, but they're working on the wrong thing or they're distracted from the essential issue. Somebody once said, it's more important to do the right thing than to do things right. And what they meant was you can hack away and build this amazing path through the jungle, but if you're headed in the wrong direction, then it's a waste of time. So you've got to make sure that people understand what it is that we're trying to solve.

Yes, that's enough. [*Laughter*]

I've got time for one more. All right. The Sikh gentleman. Yes.

Racial Profiling/Transportation Security Administration/Terrorism/Anti-Muslim Discrimination

Q. Hello. So my issue is also—my question is related to an issue which minorities face in the U.S.A. We see many times Sikhs being discriminated against, as Muslims. And even if we were Muslims, that still doesn't give the right for anyone to be Islamophobic to us. So my question is, why isn't a firm stand being taken on issues such as airport security, where there's a lot of issues with the TSA? Since your neighbors in Canada—Justin Trudeau, he recently said that he's going to apologize for an issue which happened 102 years ago, and he has recently become Prime Minister, so why is it that he is taking a firm stand on an issue which happened so long ago, whereas countries such as the U.S.A. aren't taking a stand against discrimination when it is 2016? [*Applause*]

The President. Well, the—hold on. Before everybody starts applauding that question—[*laughter*]—let's make sure that we're on the same wavelength in terms of facts. I have taken an adamant stand against making sure that we're not racially profiling in airports. And it is explicit TSA policy not to racially profile.

Now, does that mean that out of the hundreds of airports and thousands of TSA officials that there has not been times where a Sikh is going through the airport and somebody targets them for secondary screening because of what they look like? Of course, that's happened. But that's not my administration's policy. And I'm happy to provide you with chapter and verse as to why we have taken an explicit stand against this.

It does raise a broader issue that you're mentioning, which is that in pluralistic societies like the United States, like the U.K., in diverse societies, one of our biggest challenges is going to be how do we approach keeping people safe and preventing terrorist acts. There was a time when terrorism was—here in the U.K.—was largely emanating from the IRA. So this is not unique—a uniquely Muslim problem. What is also true is, today, there are a tiny subset of groups that are—have perverted Islam in justifying killing innocent people. And

how we do that in a way that is consistent with our values and consistent with pluralism and respect for religion is vitally important.

And I, about 4 months ago, visited a mosque in the United States precisely to send a message that our greatest allies in this process are the incredible Muslim Americans who are, historically, fully integrated into our society; that economically are actually doing better than the average American in many measures; that are fighting in our Armed Forces; that are defending our people in all sorts of ways; and that if we engage in Islamophobia, we are not only betraying what is essential to us, but just as a practical matter, engaging in self-defeating behavior if we're serious about terrorism.

And so the language that we use, the tactics and approaches that we take, the respect that we show all people—those are security matters. They're not—it's not just feel-good, liberal political correctness. It's a matter of what is it that we're fighting for, and how are we going to win this fight against people who are so blocked off from the reality of others who don't—they don't agree with that they'd be willing to blow themselves up and kill hundreds of people. It's the extreme of what I was just talking to this gentleman about, about the inability to compromise and recognize difference and feel comfortable with that.

So look, this is going to be a challenging issue for some time to come. But I'm confident that it is an issue that we can succeed at, as long as young people like you are committed to not just believing the right thing and feeling the right ways, but fighting for it; and so long as you're engaged and active and speaking out and listening. And if you do that, I feel pretty good about our futures. I feel good about our chances. All right?

You guys inspire me. Thank you very much. Appreciate it. Thank you!

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:27 a.m. in Lindley Hall at the Royal Horticultural Halls. In his remarks, he referred to Khadija Najefi, student, King's College London; Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom and her husband Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh; Prince William and Catherine, Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, and their son Prince George of Cambridge; former Prime Ministers Gordon Brown and Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Ali Hashem, North End ward councillor, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham; Rebecca Bunce, cofounder, IC Change campaign; and First Minister Arlene Foster and Deputy First Minister J. Martin P. McGuinness of Northern Ireland. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Participants referred to former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sen. Bernard Sanders, in their capacity as Democratic Presidential candidates; and Gillian Smith, head of human resources, Independent Living Fund.

The President's News Conference With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany in Hannover, Germany
April 24, 2016

Chancellor Merkel. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to bid a very warm welcome to the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, here to Germany on this fifth visit, this time to Hannover. And let me tell you that I am delighted to have an opportunity not only to continue our talks, but today is going to be very remarkable day, because we're going to open the Hannover fair together. And the United States of America, this year will be the—or are the partner country.

These are turbulent times. I think we would both agree. And we have an opportunity to talk about the whole spectrum of international issues. Our bilateral relations are excellent. We don't need to spend too much time on this.

But let me tell you, Barack, that I very much value our candid, open talks that are always based on mutual trust. And we talk about the

whole range of issues, and we do so today, as we have done many times previously, and I hope and trust that we shall continue to do so.

We used all of these opportunities here to—we used this opportunity here to talk about, as I said, the broader spectrum of international issues, for example, combating terrorism, tackling the root causes of flight, and also the peace process, but also questions on—related to migration in general.

In many ways, the European Union is a target for those—or a destination, rather, for those refugees that do not enjoy peace and freedom at home. So Syria loomed large on our agenda. We, together, support the political process that has to be brought forward. We support the Geneva talks. And I am greatly concerned that the cease-fire did not hold these—and hasn't held over these past few days and that there are outbreaks of fights in Aleppo and other places.

I was able to see yesterday along the border with Syria and Turkey what this means by way of suffering, of distress, of want, for people when there is fighting in their home area. So we want to do everything in order to bring the Geneva talks to a successful outcome.

We also talked about Libya, because here it's going to be very important to sustain—support the unity Government there, even though, obviously, it's a very fragile one. We have a very—this, too, is an entanglement of, on the one hand, stability, the problems that we have in—with this new unity—that this new unity Government has to restabilize the situation, but also when we look at Syria, for example, there are enormous migratory flows across the Aegean Sea that are triggered by other developments there.

I am very grateful that the United States of America are supporting the NATO mission in the Aegean. You're going to continue to do so, I understand. And this in many ways is also a joint European-American effort, a transatlantic mission, and we were at one in saying that all of the security issues on the very doorstep of Europe actually can only be solved, can only be tackled by joint transatlantic efforts. And only in this way can our common security be ensured.

But this also means—and here we were also in agreement—that a European agreement is necessary, a German agreement is necessary in many of these issues. And I think Germany over the past few months has demonstrated that we are willing to make this additional effort, to go the extra mile, be it in Iraq fighting terrorism, be it in—on the Syrian issue, be it, for example, in the way that we have become engaged in the mission in Mali and in many other places where we have taken—where we are on missions.

We talked about Afghanistan, and Afghanistan, too, needs to be kept on a track which is promising for the Afghani people. We are ready and willing to be militarily engaged, to continue to be militarily engaged. We're grateful to the United States of America for the very great responsibility that you are willing to continue to shoulder. And I think the message to the Taliban needs to be, the international community will not leave Afghanistan in its current predicament.

We then, last but not least, also talked about an issue where we are also interested in and where the United States also participate in the Normandy format, namely the solution of the crisis in Ukraine. We stand by the Minsk agreement. We attach the greatest possible importance to these—this agreement being implemented as quickly as possible. We will put a lot of efforts into making this possible in our talks with Ukraine, but also in our talks with Russia. Unfortunately, we still don't have a stable cease-fire. We need to bring the political process forward. And the next few steps we've also discussed very thoroughly.

Tonight economic issues will loom large on the agenda, which is why I don't want to go into the issue of the free trade agreement right now. We will have an opportunity to do so later on. But from a European perspective, let me say this very clearly. It is very helpful in order to allow our economy in Europe to grow. It's important for the German economy; it's important for the whole of the European economy. And if I look at the progress that was made

with the transatlantic—the TPP—the Trans-Pacific agreement, I think we all ought to have an interest in speeding matters up. And I hope and trust that the American President will continue to support these negotiations. We should do our bit in order to make this a success.

So thank you very much, again, for this visit. And I'm very much looking forward to, well, the other things that are sort of lining up for us today and tomorrow. And I'd like to welcome you on behalf of the German citizens, on behalf of the citizens of Hannover.

President Obama. Well, let me say thank you to Chancellor Merkel for your welcome. It is wonderful to be back in Germany. I believe I'm the first U.S. President to visit and spend time here in Hannover, and our magnificent surroundings reflect the history and beauty of this city.

It is always a great pleasure to be back with my friend and partner, Angela. I have valued Chancellor Merkel's thinking and perspective on a whole range of global issues throughout my Presidency. You have been a trusted partner throughout my entire Presidency—longer than any world leader—and I value your judgment. I thank you for your commitment to our alliance and to the values and human rights for which we stand. And I'm grateful for our personal friendship.

I'm here, at Angela's invitation, for the Hannover Messe trade show. Angela and I will join the opening ceremonies this evening and visit some exhibitions tomorrow. And it's a reminder that the United States and Germany are each other's—among each other's largest trading partners. It's a relationship we have to keep building and nurturing so that we're creating more jobs and more prosperity for our people and keeping our countries competitive in the global economy.

In that regard, Angela and I agree that the United States and the European Union need to keep moving forward with the Transatlantic Trade Investment Partnership negotiations, which we'll discuss more this evening.

In our bilateral meeting, we discussed the importance of boosting economic growth in the euro zone, which is critical to the global economy, including the U.S. economy. Strong growth in Europe is particularly important given the array of pressing challenges, whether its security, defense, migration, or refugees.

I should add, by the way, that given the urgency of climate change—and the economic opportunities of clean energy—both of our nations have signed the Paris climate change agreement, and we agree that it needs to be implemented quickly. And we also agree, the world has to make concrete progress this year to phase down dangerous hydrofluorocarbons.

Of course, most of our discussion, as Chancellor Merkel indicated, focused on urgent security challenges. Germany is a vital member of the coalition to destroy ISIL. German aircraft support the air campaign, and German personnel in Iraq are training local forces. German assistance is helping Iraq stabilize and rebuild the areas it liberates from ISIL. And our coalition continues to make progress. Today we discussed additional steps that NATO could take to support the campaign, as well as economic assistance to Iraq that the G–7 could pledge at next month's summit in Japan.

Germany is obviously a strong partner in international efforts to provide humanitarian relief to the people of Syria and Iraq. We remain deeply concerned about the upsurge in fighting in Syria over the last several days, and we continue to agree that the only real, durable solution is a political solution that moves Syria towards an inclusive government that represents all Syrians.

Given the horrific attacks that we've seen around the world—including Paris, Brussels, Istanbul, San Bernardino in California, and on a much more frequent basis, attacks and horrific violence that's taking place in the Middle East—we discussed the importance of maintaining our strong security cooperation.

In Afghanistan, we'll continue to help strengthen Afghan forces as they push back against Al Qaida, the Taliban, and ISIL. We'll continue to support the Libyan people and the new Libyan Government as it seeks to extend security across its country.

We agreed that the United States and Germany are going to remain very strong counterterrorism

and intelligence partners, and we're committed to using all the tools at our disposal to prevent terrorists from traveling and plotting attacks. And that includes improved information sharing between our countries and within Europe. And as always, we'll do so while upholding our values and civil liberties, including the privacy of citizens here and in the United States.

I want to once again commend Angela for her courageous leadership as Germany and Europe respond to migrants who are desperately fleeing the Syrian conflict and conflicts elsewhere in the region. Perhaps because she once lived behind a wall herself, Angela understands the aspirations of those who have been denied their freedom and who seek a better life. And I know the politics around this issue can be difficult in all of our countries. We did discuss the EU's recent agreement with Turkey, and Angela and I agree that our nations can respond to this challenge in a way that is both humane and ensures our security.

And finally, as we look ahead to this summer's NATO summit in Warsaw, we discussed the importance of keeping the Alliance strong with the investments needed for our collective defense.

We continue to augment, on a rotational basis, NATO forces in Eastern Europe, including the Baltic States. As I've said from the very beginning of my Presidency, we have a treaty obligation to defend every NATO ally, and we will.

Beyond the alliance, we welcome the formation of a new government in Ukraine, which we encourage to continue the political, economic and energy reforms that can deliver progress for the Ukrainian people. Chancellor Merkel, along with President Hollande, have been tireless in pursuit of a peaceful and durable solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. And we agree that all sides need to uphold the commitments they've made and that sanctions on Russia can and should only be lifted once Russia fully complies with its commitments under the Minsk agreement.

Tomorrow Chancellor Merkel will host our meeting with Prime Ministers Cameron, President Hollande, Prime Minister Renzi, as we discuss the full range of challenges that we face together. And it will be another reminder of how grateful I am for Angela's partnership, and how much the United States values our enduring transatlantic alliance, including with Germany.

So, *vielen dank,* Chancellor Merkel.

[*At this point, German Government Spokesperson Steffen Seibert introduced White House Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest in German, and no translation was provided. He concluded in English as follows.*]

Mr. Seibert. Josh, please.

Press Secretary Earnest. The first question will come from Roberta Rampton with Reuters.

Trade/Trans-Pacific Partnership/Syria

Q. Thank you. President Obama, you've made the case many times that T–TIP and the TPP with Asia are modern trade agreements that, kind of, deal with some of the problems or issues that arose with earlier deals. But that message doesn't seem to have resonated. The deals are very unpopular at home, and there were huge protests here yesterday over the T–TIP. And of course, it's a huge Presidential issue—Presidential election issue. So what's your plan to realistically advance the deals? Is it realistic to say you want to get T–TIP done by the end of the year? And at this point, realistically, will TPP, which is at the front of the queue, of course, have to wait for congressional approval until the lame duck session at the earliest at the end of the year?

And, Chancellor Merkel, you said yesterday in Turkey that you favor the creation of a type of safe zone in Syria. And President Obama has said in the past that he opposes these types of zones because, while they're well intentioned, they could require—they would require military force to—on the ground to protect the safety of the people. And I'm wondering whether you're going to try to convince President Obama to rethink his position on these types of safe zones and how you would see them working in terms of enforcing safety on the ground.

Thank you.

President Obama. With respect to trade, I think what you're seeing around the world is, people are unsettled by globalization. And although trade has brought enormous benefits to many of our countries that have been engaged in trade, although, typically, jobs that are produced from exports have higher wages and better benefits than those that are not involved with the export market, people visibly see a plant moving and jobs lost, and the narrative develops that this is weakening, rather than strengthening, the position of ordinary people and ordinary workers, and it's forcing them to compete with low-wage labor. And that, I think, is what drives a lot of suspicion, understandably, of these trade deals. The benefits oftentimes are diffuse, whereas a particular plant or business that feels it's been hurt by outside competition feels it very acutely.

But if you look at the benefits to the United States or to Germany of free trade around the world, it is indisputable that it has made our economies stronger. It has made sure that our businesses are the most competitive in the world. And as you see other markets like China beginning to develop and Asia beginning to develop and Africa growing fast, we've got to make sure that our businesses can compete there. Because, at least in the United States, 95 percent of the world's markets are outside of our borders, and if we're not there, present, we're going to have problems.

Now, the relationship between Europe and the United States is already one of the most robust trading relationships in the world. But what we've discovered is, is that while strengthening labor provisions and strengthening environmental provisions and standards, we can also eliminate a lot of regulatory and bureaucratic irritants and blockages to trade that would allow us to engage in even more trade, sell more goods, create more jobs, and create more prosperity.

Now, with respect to the politics of it, recent surveys in the United States, for example, showed that, actually, the majority of people still favor trade. They still recognize, on balance, that it's a good idea.

During Presidential elections, it's always tough. When we're in the heat of campaigns, people naturally are going to worry more about what's lost than what's gained with respect to trade agreements. But I am confident that we're going to be able to get this done. Keep in mind, there were people who didn't think that with Trans-Pacific Partnership that we would ever be able to give me the authority to actually move it forward, and we got it done. People didn't think we were going to be able to negotiate with 11 countries in the Asia-Pacific and have a deal that, in fact, does strengthen labor and does strengthen environmental provisions, and yet we got it done. And I think the same is going to be true here.

I don't anticipate that we will be able to have completed ratification of a deal by the end of the year, but I do anticipate that we can have completed the agreement. And then it will be presented to our various legislatures, our various parliaments. But at that point, we will have the negotiations completed and people will be able to see exactly why this would be good for our two countries.

And with respect to Congress and Trans-Pacific Partnership, I think after the primary season is over the politics settle down a little bit in Congress, and we'll be in a position to start moving forward. Because I know that we have had a majority of Members in the past who were in favor of this deal. Otherwise, we wouldn't have gotten the authority for me to go ahead and fast-track this agreement. But I think we all know that elections can sometimes make things a little more challenging, and people take positions, in part, to protect themselves from attacks during the course of election season.

One thing I do want to say with respect to Syria: We all care deeply about the tragic humanitarian crisis inside of Syria. I live with this every day. I read about it every day. We talk to people who are experiencing suffering or have witnessed the suffering that's going on there. We are in constant communications with Turkey, our NATO ally, in finding ways in which we can resolve this situation. I—as you know, I spoke to President Putin early last week to try

to make sure that we could reinstate the cessation of hostilities and make sure that the political process does not unwind.

But having said all that, the issue surrounding a safe zone in Syrian territory is not a matter of an ideological objection on my part. It's not a matter of me not wishing I could help and protect a whole bunch of people. It's a very practical issue about, how do you do it? And who is going to put on a bunch of ground troops inside of Syria? And how do you let people in? And who do you let in, and who do you let out? And how is it monitored?

And the truth of the matter is, is that when I go through with my Defense Department—and we've done it multiple times—how a proposal like that might work, as a practical matter, sadly, it is very difficult to see how it would operate short of us essentially being willing to militarily take over a big chunk of that country. And that requires a big military commitment.

And I think that one of the biggest challenges that Angela and I both face is, is that we oftentimes see great wrongs taking place around the world, and we do everything that we can to try to right them, but one of the things I've learned as President is, we have to make sure that whatever it is that we say we're going to do we can deliver. And creating a situation in which we could actually protect all the people inside of Syria, the best bet for doing that is to get this political process on track, a transition on track, so that all the parties can safely lay down their arms and create the kind of inclusive, representational government that Syria so desperately needs.

Chancellor Merkel. I think if you actually follow closely my remarks yesterday in Turkey, you will be able to understand that this is something that I think needs to come out of this Geneva process. It's not something that can be called a safe zone in a traditional way. But when we talk about a cease-fire, is it actually possible to identify certain regions in the course of the negotiations by the parties in Geneva where people can feel particularly safe?

This is not about influencing the matter from the outside; it is something that needs to come out of the process itself. Because we have tens of thousands of refugees along the Turkish-Syrian border; we have to send a message to them. There are other regions also where one might think of that. Well, the ceasefire in—as a whole needs to be put in place, but these are areas where there is a particular obligation incumbent upon all the different parties where, for example, humanitarian access can guarantee, where the people don't have to have the impression they have to flee this particular area, as well, have again to go to Turkey or to other areas. But it needs to be part and parcel of the Geneva negotiating process, and not something that comes sort of out of the blue.

Mr. Seibert. Kristina Dunz from Deutsche Presse-Agentur, German Press Agency.

Syria/German-U.S. Relations/North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Q. Madam Chancellor, Mr. President, this is presumably your last joint sort of visit, or appearance, rather, here in Germany during your term. If you were to draw stock, what were your best experiences and what were your worst—between Medal of Freedom and NSA affair—if I may call it that?

And, Madam Chancellor, the United States actually wants Germany to do more as regards its military presence within NATO. Are you ready to increase, for example, soldiers and the contingent in order to achieve a deterrence via Russia in the east by locating ground troops there? And should the United States not help more by absorbing, for example, more than 10,000 refugees from Syria this year? And will you see to it that from G–7 in Japan, a G–8 process will evolve over time?

Chancellor Merkel. I have the impression that we're actually quite busy with the conflicts that we need to solve in the world as of today. And we have new tasks all the time on our agenda, so I am not in a position to draw stock now. What you see is a testimony to our close partnership and cooperation and friendship based on mutual trust. And I'm very grateful for this because it helps us to solve international issues.

Germany—if I look at the term of office of President Barack Obama—in many instances has become a more active partner, I think one can safely say, because we are also threatened, our very own security is threatened, and we realize that we cannot ensure this on our own. We have to do this in our alliance.

In certain areas ,we have shouldered a long-term mission that we're going to continue. If I look at Afghanistan, for example, in a way we've had a change of paradigm in the sense that we see this challenge of IS as something that is very acute. So we send weapons into a conflict area. We gave them to the Peshmerga, a completely new step compared to our past policies.

Looking at terrorist threat against France, for example, we've shouldered responsibility in a mission in Northern Africa, which is also a new thing—well, leaving the Congo mission aside where we spent some time.

But if we meet in Germany, if we meet at G–7 or again in Warsaw, we shall have other opportunities to meet, the President and I. We shall address all of these issues. So let me say, for me, the future with the President is much more important than the past right now.

We know that we obviously have to make additional efforts as regards our possibilities to defend ourselves. We have to put in more equipment, more personnel. We know the targets that NATO has submitted to us. We think that the whole positioning of our federal armed forces reflects fully the—our sense that we need to shoulder this international responsibility, also, as regards, for example, cyber threats, something that we've neglected to do over the past years. And I think that helps. It helps us to tackle the challenges and to master them. And the cooperation with the United States is indispensable.

Looking at the larger neighborhood of Europe, transatlantic cooperation within NATO, but also in other fora is absolutely essential for maintaining our own security and safety.

President Obama. Very briefly, I want to go back to Roberta's point. As Chancellor Merkel mentioned, part of the notion of a cessation of hostilities is that the parties to the conflict would carve out areas in which, because the opposition is a signatory to that cessation, the regime agrees not to attack those areas. And she's exactly right. And here there's no space between us—that if we can get the political transition to separate out areas where a moderate opposition that's at the table controls it, that should be a safe area. If it's ISIL or Nusra, that's not a safe area. And that's the concept that we've been trying to build.

Now, it's been framed in part because the Syrian regime has been cheating, in part because there are areas where Nusra and moderate opposition forces both reside and it's been difficult to separate them geographically. But that concept of ultimately bringing some safety and security within the country is entirely consistent with what we're trying to do in our negotiations.

Now, with respect to the U.S.-German relationship and my relationship with Chancellor Merkel, I've said this before, I will repeat: This is as important a relationship as I've had during the course of my Presidency. Chancellor Merkel has been consistent. She has been steady. She is trustworthy. She has a really good sense of humor that she doesn't show all the time at press conferences. [*Laughter*] She's a little more—she's much more serious in front of all of you—[*laughter*]. And—which probably serves her well. That's why she's been such a long-lasting leader, because she watches what she says.

But if you think about the first time I came here, we were in the midst of a potential collapse of the global economy. And I believe that it was in large part because of our joint leadership, because of Europe and the United States and other partners around the world coming together and having a clear vision, that we were able to stabilize the global financial system. And our two countries now have been able to grow steadily and reduce unemployment and recovered much better than a number of other countries around the world.

When you think about the Paris accord, that doesn't happen unless there's strong U.S.-German cooperation, and making sure that we are arresting the pace of climate change is as

important as any issue that we're going to face in the decades to come. Making sure that we're able to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon without resort to war, that occurred because of the partnership of the P5-plus-1 and the leadership that Angela and others have shown.

In Afghanistan, German troops have been vital in us assisting Afghans to defend their own country. In Ukraine, the Normandy process, I think, fair—it's fair to say, works in part because the United States stands shoulder to shoulder with Angela and President Hollande to draw a very firm line about the basic principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty.

So there's not an issue in which we've worked together where I have not been hugely appreciative of Angela's steady leadership and trustworthiness. And as she noted, although it's true that I will be saying goodbye from this current position in around 9 months, a lot happens in 9 months. Everybody kept on saying to me originally that somehow things would slow down in the second half of my last term. It hasn't happened yet. [*Laughter*] I seem to be pretty busy. And I look forward—in addressing many of the challenges that we face, including those that we'll discuss at NATO, those that we'll discuss at the G–7, those that we'll discuss at the G–20—to know that I have a strong partner in Angela Merkel.

Last point I would make, with respect to European defense spending. I think it is absolutely true that, under Angela's leadership, Germany has been more forward leaning on a whole variety of areas.

I do continue to maintain—and I will say this leading up to the NATO conference and beyond—that given the pressures both from the south and the aggressive posture and enormous spending that we're seeing out of Russia, it is important for all of our NATO members to try to hit the target that we set in Wales of 2 percent of defense spending so that everyone is able to maintain the kind of defense capacity—in part to prevent wars—not necessarily to initiate them, but to be in a position where we can send a strong signal that we can meet our alliance obligations and deal with these new and rapidly emerging challenges that confront Europe, as well as the world.

Press Secretary Earnest. The second U.S. journalist that we'll recognize is Colleen McCain Nelson from the Wall Street Journal.

North Korea

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. North Korea launched a ballistic missile from a submarine on Saturday. Later, North Korea's Foreign Minister told the AP that they will halt its nuclear tests if the U.S. suspends its military exercises with South Korea. Do you view that as a serious overture? And at this point, how do you assess North Korea's nuclear capabilities?

And to Chancellor Merkel, you both have spoken about the strong working relationship that the two of you have. As you look ahead to 2017 and the end of President Obama's term, how do you view the possibility of working with a new U.S. President who has called your refugee policy "insane" and has raised the specter of dissolving NATO? [*Laughter*]

President Obama. I—[*laughter*]. So, with respect to North Korea, we're still analyzing and assessing with precision the activities that North Korea engaged in over the last several days. So I'll let the Pentagon and our intelligence community debrief everyone once this—we have precise information.

What is clear is that North Korea continues to engage in continuous, provocative behavior; that they have been actively pursuing a nuclear program, an ability to launch nuclear weapons. And although more often than not they fail in many of these tests, they gain knowledge each time they engage in these tests. And we take it very seriously. And so do our allies, and so does the entire world.

And it's for this reason why we have continually mobilized the international community to isolate North Korea, to crank up the sanctions that impose a cost on Kim Jong Un and Pyongyang, and why we've cultivated cooperation with the Chinese to put more pressure on North Korea. And although it is not where we would completely like it to be, I will say that we've seen the Chinese be more alarmed and take more seriously what North Korea is doing,

and they have been willing to be more forward leaning in exacting a price on North Korea's destructive behavior.

In terms of overtures, we don't take seriously a promise to simply halt—until the next time they decide to do a test—these kinds of activities. What we've said consistently, dating back to the six-party talks, is that if North Korea shows seriousness in denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, then we will be prepared to enter into some serious conversations with them about reducing tensions and our approach to protecting our allies in the region. But that's not something that happens based on a press release in the wake of a series of provocative behaviors. They're going to have to do better than that.

And until they do, we're going to continue to emphasize our work with the Republic of Korea and Japan and our missile defense mechanisms to assure that we're keeping the American people safe and our—we're keeping our allies safe.

Chancellor Merkel. As to your question, let me make two remarks. First, I concentrate on the task ahead for 2016. I'm quite busy with that, thank you very much. And I'm looking with great interest at the American election campaign. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Seibert. The one last question is going to come from Nico Fried from the Süddeutsche Zeitung.

Libya/Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership/U.S. Presidency/European Migration Crisis

Q. Madam Chancellor, the President, a few days ago, said that it was a grave mistake not to have had a plan after the intervention in Libya ready. Do you think—feel confirmed by the fact that you abstained from that? And do you feel that you are actually sufficiently supported after this—in your policies after this decision was taken?

And, Mr. President, in Germany, there is very great resistance against particularly those private dispute settlement schemes in T–TIP. And what—are you going to accommodate the Germans? And are you actually envious of the Chancellor that her term of office is actually unlimited, according to our Constitution, compared to yours? [*Laughter*]

Chancellor Merkel. Actually, but you—[*laughter*]—I was interested—I was so, listening so interestingly—[*laughter*]—because I always have this 6 o'clock at the back of my mind. What was your question? Oh, yes, on Libya.

Q. Do you feel confirmed by the decision you've taken. [*Laughter*]

Chancellor Merkel. Well, if you take a decision that is different from the decision that one of your friends is taking—it was an abstention at the time—it's never easy, but you still remain friends, and it still remains your joined goal that you're pursuing. Now, what's on the agenda now is something that's affecting us, it's affecting the United States of America, and it's affecting everyone. We need to build up a functioning state in Libya, which is anything but easy. That's why we're working so closely and with such commitment in trying to—strengthening this unity Government, and that's why we're trying to cooperate internationally in order to bring about this goal and not have different goals that we pursue.

So, basically, let's look ahead. Let's look at what we want to achieve. Let's try and stabilize this country. It's not easy, not at all, because they have a tribal structure in Libya. They have a very—well, a history very much their own. They have a situation there on the ground that is such that they have never had a national army, never had a functioning state as we know it. So that's everything—all of these things come into the equation—we have to think of when we try to stabilize the country, when we try to strengthen the population there. And we do this together with the United States.

President Obama. First, with respect to Libya, just to—I want to be very clear: I continue to believe that it was the right thing to do for us to intervene as part of a U.N.-mandated international coalition to prevent some of the potentially murderous behavior that Qaddafi was talking about. I do believe that it was important for us to properly plan, prepare, and resource what came next. And I think it was possible for

us to do that effectively. I think that we didn't do it as effectively as we should have.

That does not negate, though, as Angela said, the importance of us all now investing in making sure that there's a functioning Libyan Government. And the fact that we now have a Government of National Accord, fragile as it is, requires us to do everything we can to encourage it. And this is a conversation I've had throughout my meetings during this trip, whether in Riyadh or London or now here.

With respect to the T–TIP negotiations, what you're seeing is differences continually narrowing. And I think it's up to the negotiators to try to find compromises and solutions on all these issues.

The issue of dispute settlement is something that has gained a lot of attention and attraction among those who generally oppose trade agreements. Keep in mind that the vast majority of trade agreements already contain such dispute resolution mechanisms. And the terrible scenarios that are painted in which suddenly corporations are going around suing countries so that they are not able to enforce their public health laws or their financial regulations or their environmental laws, none of these things have happened with the many trade agreements that currently exist and that Germany and the United States and the EU and others are already a party to.

So I think it's important for us to look at the facts and not a bunch of hypothetical pronouncements. And the fact is that, for example, in the Trans-Pacific Partnership that we've negotiated, you have countries that right now have very few labor rights that now are required to have labor rights and, by the way, can be enforced by workers, the same way that corporations have. You have environmental provisions that now are fully enforceable and that raise standards in countries that may not even have, up until this point, any serious environmental laws in place.

And so if you look point by point, the issue is not whether or not there is going to be trade. The issue is going to be, under what terms. And I believe that countries like the United States, countries like Germany, that already have high standards, that already make sure that how businesses operate are not completely based on profit, but are also based on the common good, that that improves rather than detracts from the kinds of progressive goals that brought me into office in the first place. Otherwise, I wouldn't support these laws.

And with respect to your last question, I do not envy Angela Merkel—[*laughter*]—for not having term limits. I've said this before. I love this job. It is an extraordinary privilege, and I wake up every day knowing that what I do matters, and that I can help somebody somewhere, both inside the United States and around the world, make the world a little safer, a little more prosperous, help some child get an education, help some disease get cured. It is an extraordinary privilege.

But I have come to appreciate, at least in the United States, the wisdom of our Founders. I think it's healthy for a big, diverse country like ours to have some turnover—to use a phrase from basketball, some fresh legs to come in and—or to use another sports analogy, that I run my portion of the race and then I pass the baton to the next person. And my goal between now and the time I leave is to make sure that when I turn over the keys to my office, that the desk is clean, and if the world is not completely tidy, that at least it's significantly better off than the way I found it.

Now, having said that, I'm glad Angela is still sticking around—[*laughter*]—because I think the world benefits from her steady presence. And she is to be admired for her remarkable endurance. And I'll—as a private citizen, I will continue to admire her and appreciate the work that she's doing.

By the way, what's happening with respect to her position on refugees here in Europe, she is on the right side of history on this. And for her to take on some very tough politics in order to express not just a humanitarian concern, but also a practical concern, that in this globalized world, it is very difficult for us to simply build walls, she is giving voice, I think, to the kinds of principles that bring people together rather than divide them. And I'm very proud of her

for that. And I'm proud of the German people for that.

All right. Thank you very much.

Chancellor Merkel. Danke schoen.

President Obama. Danke schoen.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5 p.m. in the L'Orangery at Schloss Herrenhausen. In his remarks, the President referred to President François Hollande of France; Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of Italy; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; and Supreme Commander Kim Jong Un of North Korea. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known as IS. A reporter referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Ri Su Yong of North Korea; and Donald J. Trump, chairman and chief executive officer, Trump Organization, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate. Chancellor Merkel, Mr. Seibert, and some reporters spoke in German, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at the Opening Ceremony of the Hannover Messe Trade Fair in Hannover

April 24, 2016

Thank you very much. Hello, everyone. *Guten abend!* I want to thank my great partner and friend, Chancellor Merkel, for inviting me here to Hannover. It is great to be with you at the world's leading showcase for industrial technologies that power our global economy.

I'm pleased that this year the United States is the official partner country for the very first time. And it is an honor to be the first United States President ever to attend the Hannover Messe. It's also quite a pleasure to be here as Germans celebrate the 500th anniversary of your beer purity law. [*Laughter*] I will—I may join you in that celebration. [*Laughter*]

I'm joined here today by our Commerce Secretary, Penny Pritzker, more than 350 American companies—including more than 200 small and medium-sized businesses—and dozens of economic development organizations from States, cities, and communities across the United States. And I am here, and we are here because we are ready to do even more business with Germany, more business with Europe, and more business with the world.

In many ways, this event reflects the larger story of the alliance between our two countries. After the Second World War, much of this city and Europe lay in ruins. But then, together, we set out to rebuild, with the help of the Marshall Plan. Just a few months after that plan was announced, businesspeople and investors from around the world gathered in Hannover, in a factory, to see how they could help spark what would become a German economic miracle. And for nearly 70 years, the world has come to Hannover to experience the technologies that have helped to deliver unprecedented prosperity to people around the world.

As President, I've worked to make sure that we are sustaining this spirit of innovation in the United States. We've launched next-generation manufacturing hubs and new online tools to help entrepreneurs start new businesses faster. Over the past 6 years, the United States has created more than 14 million private sector jobs, including hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs. And here at Hannover Messe, you will see examples of American growth and ingenuity, including a full, 3–D-printed electric car. Angela, maybe you and I, we can go driving. [*Laughter*] I'll have to ask Secret Service, but—[*laughter*].

Because we live in a global economy where so much of our economic growth and job creation is fueled by trade, I've also worked to make sure we're trading more with each other. Germany has long been one of our top trading partners, and during my time in office, we've boosted U.S. exports to Germany, and we've increased our bilateral trade by nearly 40

percent to a record $235 billion last year. German investment in the United States now supports more than 600,000 American jobs. And you're selling more of your products to America as well. Last year, for the first time in decades, the United States became the top market for exports of German goods.

So we need to build on this success. I want us doing even more business together, more trade, and creating more jobs for our people, which brings me to my first message today, because I know we have companies here from all over the world. As you look around the globe and try to decide where to invest, where to set up shop, I urge you to select the United States of America: "SelectUSA." Of course, I would imagine the Chancellor makes a pretty strong case for investing in Germany, and there are a lot of good reasons for that. But as President of the United States, I've got a pretty strong argument as well. So, Angela, with your understanding, I'm going to give everybody here the best pitch that I can.

In the United States, you have access to one of the world's largest markets, more than 320 million people. Our world-class universities and research centers are responsible for more than a quarter of the world's research and development. We've been issuing about 300,000 utility patents a year for new ways to manufacture. Americans are among the most productive workers in the world; manufacturing productivity has surged. We've become more energy efficient, which lowers costs. And with our SelectUSA initiative—cutting redtape, streamlining regulations—it's even easier for companies like yours to come and build in America. That's a pretty good sales pitch. [*Laughter*]

Which brings me to the other message I want to deliver today. The United States and the European Union already have the largest trade and investment relationship in the world. We trade about $3 billion in goods and services every single day. We invest more than $4 trillion in each other's economies. And all that trade and investment supports around 13 million jobs across our countries. That's good news.

So what's the problem? As your companies know, there are still too many barriers that prevent more transatlantic trade and investment. Even though tariffs between the United States and the EU are relatively low on average, some products still face high tariffs, very high tariffs—essentially, taxes that make it harder to export and sell. Different regulations, rules, standards—all these drive up costs, keep manufacturers out of markets, or force companies to make different versions of the same product for different markets; duplicative tests and inspections and more costs. Taken together, these barriers are holding us back from even greater trade, investment, and job creation.

That's the reason why the United States and the EU have moved forward with the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or T–TIP. I know that trade can evoke great emotions, in all of our countries. Over the years, some workers and families have felt the costs—the localized costs of globalization and automation and jobs shipped overseas—without necessarily seeing or feeling the benefits of trade, which are more diffuse and broadly shared. And these anxieties are real, and at a time of growing inequality in many advanced economies, we have to address them. But the answer is not to pull up the drawbridge and stop trade; in a global economy, that's not possible. The answer is to learn from the past and do trade the right way, with high standards for workers and consumers and the environment. And that's the kind of trade that we're pursuing in this partnership.

T–TIP will eliminate tariffs, simplify procedures, bridge differences in regulations, and cut redtape, all of which will make it easier to invest and trade, including for our small businesses who create so many of our jobs. And I want to be clear about this. T–TIP will not lower standards, it will raise standards even higher: high labor standards to protect workers, high standards to protect consumers and give them more choices, high standards to protect the environment. And something very important in our digital economies, it will help ensure we have a free and open Internet, the

greatest engine for innovation the world has ever seen.

It is true, though, that T–TIP has larger, strategic benefits as well. At a time of widening inequality in the world, including in Europe, T–TIP will help encourage growth across the 28 nations of the EU, including southern Europe. At a time when some are questioning the future of European integration, T–TIP will encourage the higher long-term growth Europe needs to create more jobs, including for our young people. At a time when other countries are trying to shape global trade to their advantage, our countries—which make up nearly half the global economy—have the opportunity to write the rules for trade in a way that reflects our values, like rule of law, transparency, and respect for human rights.

And finally, in this time of uncertainty, including here in Europe, when others would use trade and energy as a weapon, T–TIP would help Europe diversify energy markets and increase energy security. So for all these reasons, the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership would reinforce our larger transatlantic relationship, which has been the foundation for our prosperity and security these past seven decades. It would bind us even closer and help lift the fortunes of our people, renewing confidence that democracy delivers progress.

So in closing, I want to point out that we've now been negotiating T–TIP for 3 years. We have made important progress. But time is not on our side. If we don't complete negotiations this year, then upcoming political transitions—in the United States and Europe—could mean this agreement won't be finished for quite some time. I know the politics are hard. But we have to keep making our case, stating the facts, and dispelling any misperceptions. We can't let this opportunity close. The time to complete T–TIP is now, and I'm here to say that the United States is prepared to make every effort to reach an ambitious, comprehensive, and high-standard agreement this year.

And just as I have demonstrated my willingness to invest political capital back home to expand trade that creates jobs, I call on leaders across Europe to join me and Chancellor Merkel in doing the same. That's how we can sustain the progress that began here in Hannover nearly 70 years ago. That's how we can unleash the next wave of innovation and the jobs that lift up our people. And that's how we can keep strong our transatlantic relationship and a global economy of rules and high standards for generations to come. So thank you so much for this opportunity. *Vielen danke.* Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:58 p.m. in the Kuppelsaal at the Hannover Congress Centrum.

Remarks With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany at the Hannover Messe Trade Fair in Hannover, Germany
April 25, 2016

President Obama. Please have a seat. *Guten morgen!* Once again, I want to thank Chancellor Merkel and everyone here at Hannover Messe for welcoming us. Angela and I already spoke last night. I'm giving a speech later this morning. So I'm going to be very brief.

As I said last night, so much of our global economy and the growth that creates jobs is driven by the spirit of innovation—discovery, invention—and then turning those ideas into new products, companies, new industries, new services that create good jobs. So here at the U.S. pavilion, we are proud to showcase America's commitment to innovation. You'll see pioneering companies that are changing the way that we live, the way that we work, the way that we learn. So this is another chance for me to tell everyone to come here and buy "Made in America."

Last night, I also talked about why companies around the world that are looking for where to set up shop should select America.

And here at the pavilion, you'll find States, cities, and communities from across the United States who are ready to welcome you with open arms.

Of course, Angela may have different ideas when we go to the German pavilion. [*Laughter*] But this friendly competition is healthy. It is what has made our two countries some of the most competitive in the world, our workers the best in the world, our products the best in the world.

So again, I want to thank Angela and everyone at Hannover Messe. I expect that the results—as a result of this great event, we'll see more partnerships, more trade, and more good jobs for our people on both sides of the Atlantic. Angela and I are going to go check out some exhibits, but first I know that she wants to say a few words as well.

[*At this point, Chancellor Merkel spoke in German, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Chancellor Merkel. Mr. President, dear Barack, I am delighted that we are able to welcome so many guests from the United States here today. You have more than 400 exhibitors, more than 400 companies that are presenting their goods, that are presenting their products here this year as guest country, as partner country of the Hannover Fair. And I'm very much looking forward that later on we're going to take a tour and we're going to be presented very tangible examples of what companies produce here and what the companies themselves are doing.

Well, I think I can safely speak on behalf of the German business community as well when I welcome you most cordially—you, the representatives of your companies here—as friends. We know you are our friends, you are partners. But you're also very strong companies, and we know that you want to present your products here. You want to be strong. But our companies, too, want to present their products, want to be strong, they want to learn from you. We want to learn from each other. We want to get closer to each other, because we both want to shape innovation. We want to be forward looking in this world of tomorrow.

And I think we're—all of us are very interested in bringing our products to bear in this world that is getting more and more interesting—to present our products here at the Hannover Fair. And we're—hope and trust that this Hannover Fair again will be a highlight of industrial production and of trade. It is a top-of-the-world event as regards industrial trade fairs, and we trust that it's going to be the same this year again.

But I think we should not forget that, obviously, companies are presenting themselves here during this industrial trade fair, but behind companies are always and invariably the members of the workforce. Workers, ordinary Americans, want to secure their jobs—and ordinary Germans, for that matter—who want safe jobs, who want to secure their jobs, who want to work for their prospects. And so that's never an abstract concept. But it's also so that such an industrial fair also is about people, about people on both sides of the Atlantic. So what we have here today is also a piece of America that we see and that we meet.

And again, a very warm welcome to all of you.

[*Chancellor Merkel spoke in English as follows.*]

And now I learn the proof of the pudding is the eating. Let's start. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 9 a.m. in Hall 3 at the Hannover Fairgrounds.

Remarks in Hannover
April 25, 2016

Thank you. Please. *Guten tag!* It is wonderful to see all of you, and I want to begin by thanking Chancellor Merkel for being here. On behalf of the American people, I want to

thank Angela for being a champion of our alliance. And on behalf of all of us, I want to thank you for your commitment to freedom and equality and human rights, which is a reflection of your inspiring life. I truly believe you've shown us the leadership of steady hands. How do you call it? The *Merkel-Raute.* [*Laughter*] And over the last 7 years, I have relied on your friendship and counsel, and your firm moral compass. So we very much appreciate your Chancellor, Angela Merkel.

To the Members of the Bundestag, Prime Minister Weil, Mayor Schostok, distinguished guests, people of Germany. And I'm especially pleased to see the young people here, from Germany and across Europe. We also have some proud Americans here. [*Laughter*]

I have to admit that I have developed a special place in my heart for the German people. Back when I was a candidate for this office, you welcomed me with a small rally in Berlin—[*laughter*]—where I spoke of the change that's possible when the world stands as one. As President, you've treated me and Michelle and our daughters to wonderful hospitality. You've offered me excellent beer—[*laughter*]—and weisswurst in Krün. You've now hosted our delegation here in Hannover.

My only regret is that I have never been to Germany for *Oktoberfest.* [*Laughter*] So I will have to come back. And I suspect it's more fun when you're not President. [*Laughter*] So my timing will be good.

And as always, I bring the friendship of the American people. We consider the German people, and all of our European allies, to be among our closest friends in the world, because we share so much experience and so many of the same values. We believe that nations and peoples should live in security and peace. We believe in creating opportunity that lifts up not just the few but the many. And I'm proud to be the first American President to come to Europe and be able to say that in the United States, health care is not a privilege, it is now a right for all. We share that as well.

Perhaps most importantly, we believe in the equality and inherent dignity of every human being. Today in America, people have the freedom to marry the person that they love. We believe in justice, that no child in the world should ever die from a mosquito bite; that no one should suffer from the ache of an empty stomach; that, together, we can save our planet and the world's most vulnerable people from the worst effects of climate change. These are things that we share. It's born of common experience.

And this is what I want to talk to you about today: the future that we are building together—not separately, but together. And that starts right here in Europe.

And I want to begin with an observation that, given the challenges that we face in the world and the headlines we see every day, may seem improbable, but it's true. We are fortunate to be living in the most peaceful, most prosperous, most progressive era in human history. That may surprise young people who are watching TV or looking at your phones and it seems like only bad news comes through every day. But consider that it's been decades since the last war between major powers. More people live in democracies. We're wealthier and healthier and better educated, with a global economy that has lifted up more than a billion people from extreme poverty and created new middle classes from the Americas to Africa to Asia. Think about the health of the average person in the world, tens of millions of lives that we now save from disease and infant mortality, and people now living longer lives.

Around the world, we're more tolerant, with more opportunity for women and gays and lesbians, as we push back on bigotry and prejudice. And around the world, there's a new generation of young people—like you—that are connected by technology and driven by your idealism and your imagination, and you're working together to start new ventures and to hold governments more accountable and advance human dignity.

If you had to choose a moment in time to be born, any time in human history, and you didn't know ahead of time what nationality you were or what gender or what your economic status might be, you'd choose today—which isn't to say that there is not still enormous

suffering and enormous tragedy and so much work for us to do. It is to remember that the trajectory of our history over the last 50, 100 years has been remarkable. And we can't take that for granted, and we should take confidence in our ability to be able to shape our own destiny.

Now, that doesn't mean that we can be complacent, because today dangerous forces do threaten to pull the world backward, and our progress is not inevitable. These challenges threaten Europe, and they threaten our transatlantic community. We're not immune from the forces of change around the world. As they have elsewhere, barbaric terrorists have slaughtered innocent people in Paris and Brussels and Istanbul and San Bernardino, California. And we see these tragedies in places central to our daily lives—an airport or cafe, a workplace or a theater—and it unsettles us. It makes us unsure in our day-to-day lives, fearful not just for ourselves, but those that we love. Conflicts from South Sudan to Syria to Afghanistan have sent millions fleeing, seeking the relative safety of Europe's shores, but that puts new strains on countries and local communities and threatens to distort our politics.

Russian aggression has flagrantly violated the sovereignty and territory of an independent European nation, Ukraine, and that unnerves our allies in Eastern Europe, threatening our vision of a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace. And it seems to threaten the progress that's been made since the end of the cold war.

Slow economic growth in Europe, especially in the south, has left millions unemployed, including a generation of young people without jobs and who may look to the future with diminishing hopes. And all these persistent challenges have led some to question whether European integration can long endure; whether you might be better off separating off, redrawing some of the barriers and the laws between nations that existed in the 20th century.

Across our countries, including in the United States, a lot of workers and families are still struggling to recover from the worst economic crisis in generations. And that trauma of millions who lost their jobs and their homes and their savings is still felt. And meanwhile, there are profound trends underway that have been going on for decades—globalization, automation—that in some cases have depressed wages and made workers in a weaker position to bargain for better working conditions. Wages have stagnated in many advanced countries while other costs have gone up. Inequality has increased. And for many people, it's harder than ever just to hold on.

This is happening in Europe; we see some of these trends in the United States and across the advanced economies. And these concerns and anxieties are real. They are legitimate. They cannot be ignored, and they deserve solutions from those in power.

Unfortunately, in the vacuum, if we do not solve these problems, you start seeing those who would try to exploit these fears and frustrations and channel them in a destructive way. A creeping emergence of the kind of politics that the European project was founded to reject: an "us" versus "them" mentality that tries to blame our problems on the other, somebody who doesn't look like us or doesn't pray like us, whether it's immigrants or Muslims or somebody who is deemed different than us.

And you see increasing intolerance in our politics. And loud voices get the most attention. This reminds you of the poem by the great Irish poet W.B. Yeats, where "the best lack all conviction," and "the worst are full of passionate intensity."

So this is a defining moment. And what happens on this continent has consequences for people around the globe. If a unified, peaceful, liberal, pluralistic, free-market Europe begins to doubt itself, begins to question the progress that's been made over the last several decades, then we can't expect the progress that is just now taking hold in many places around the world will continue. Instead, we will be empowering those who argue that democracy can't work, that intolerance and tribalism and organizing ourselves along ethnic lines and authoritarianism and restrictions on the press—that those are the things that the challenges of today demand.

So I've come here today, to the heart of Europe, to say that the United States, and the entire world, needs a strong and prosperous and democratic and united Europe.

And perhaps you need an outsider, somebody who is not European, to remind you of the magnitude of what you have achieved. The progress that I described was made possible in large measure by ideals that originated on this continent in a great Enlightenment and the founding of new republics. Of course, that progress didn't travel a straight line. In the last century—twice in just 30 years—the forces of empire and intolerance and extreme nationalism consumed this continent. And cities like this one were largely reduced to rubble. Tens of millions of men and women and children were killed.

But from the ruins of the Second World War, our nations set out to remake the world, to build a new international order and the institutions to uphold it: a United Nations to prevent another world war and advance a more just and lasting peace, international financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to promote prosperity for all peoples, a Universal Declaration of Human Rights to advance the "inalienable rights of all members of the human family." And here in Europe, giants like Chancellor Adenauer set out to bind old adversaries through commerce and through trade. As Adenauer said in those early days: "European unity was a dream of a few. It became a hope for [the] many. Today it is a necessity for all of us."

And it wasn't easy. Old animosities had to be overcome. National pride had to be joined with a commitment to a common good. Complex questions of sovereignty and burden sharing had to be answered. And at every step, the impulse to pull back, for each country to go its own way, had to be resisted. More than once, skeptics predicted the demise of this great project.

But the vision of European unity soldiered on, and having defended Europe's freedom in war, America stood with you every step of this journey: a Marshall Plan to rebuild, an airlift to save Berlin, a NATO alliance to defend our way of life. America's commitment to Europe was captured by a young American President, John F. Kennedy, when he stood in a free West Berlin and declared that "freedom is indivisible, and when one man is enslaved, all are not free."

With strength and resolve and the power of our ideals and a belief in a unified Europe, we didn't simply end the cold war. Freedom won. Germany was reunited. You welcomed new democracies into an even—"ever closer union." You may argue over whose football clubs are better, vote for different singers on Eurovision. [*Laughter*] But your accomplishment—more than 500 million people speaking 24 languages in 28 countries, 19 with a common currency, in one European Union—remains one of the greatest political and economic achievements of modern times.

Yes, European unity can require frustrating compromise. It adds layers of government that can slow decisionmaking. I understand. I've been in meetings with the European Commission. And, as an American, we're famously disdainful of government. We understand how easy it must be to vent at Brussels and complain. But remember that every member of your Union is a democracy. That's not an accident. Remember that no EU country has raised arms against another. That's not an accident. Remember that NATO is as strong as it's ever been.

Remember that our market economies, as Angela and I saw this morning, are the greatest generators of innovation and wealth and opportunity in history. Our freedom, our quality of life remains the envy of the world, so much so that parents are willing to walk across deserts, cross the seas on makeshift rafts and risk everything in the hope of giving their children the blessings that we—that you—enjoy, blessings that you cannot take for granted.

This continent, in the 20th century, was at constant war. People starved on this continent. Families were separated on this continent. And now people desperately want to come here precisely because of what you've created. You can't take that for granted.

And today, more than ever, a strong, united Europe remains, as Adenauer said, a necessity for all of us. It's a necessity for the United States, because Europe's security and prosperity is inherently indivisible from our own. We can't cut ourselves off from you. Our economies are integrated. Our cultures are integrated. Our peoples are integrated. You saw the response of the American people to Paris and Brussels; it's because, in our imaginations, this is our cities.

A strong, united Europe is a necessity for the world because an integrated Europe remains vital to our international order. Europe helps to uphold the norms and rules that can maintain peace and promote prosperity around the world.

Consider what we've done in recent years: pulling the global economy back from the brink of depression and putting the world on the path of recovery; a comprehensive deal that's cut off every single one of Iran's paths to a nuclear bomb, part of a shared vision of a world without nuclear weapons; in Paris, the most ambitious agreement in history to fight climate change; stopping Ebola in West Africa and saving countless lives; rallying the world around new sustainable development, including our goal to end extreme poverty. None of those things could have happened if I—if the United States—did not have a partnership with a strong and united Europe. It wouldn't have happened.

That's what's possible when Europe and America and the world stand as one. And that's precisely what we're going to need to face down the very real dangers that we face today. So let me just lay out the kind of cooperation that we're going to need. We need a strong Europe to bear its share of the burden, working with us on behalf of our collective security. The United States has an extraordinary military, the best the world's ever known, but the nature of today's threats means we can't deal with these challenges by ourselves.

Right now the most urgent threat to our nations is ISIL, and that's why we're united in our determination to destroy it. And all 28 NATO allies are contributing to our coalition, whether it's striking ISIL targets in Syria and Iraq or supporting the air campaign or training local forces in Iraq or providing critical humanitarian aid. And we continue to make progress, pushing ISIL back from territory that it controlled.

And just as I've approved additional support for Iraqi forces against ISIL, I've decided to increase U.S. support for local forces fighting ISIL in Syria. A small number of American special operations forces are already on the ground in Syria, and their expertise has been critical as local forces have driven ISIL out of key areas. So given the success, I've approved the deployment of up to 250 additional U.S. personnel in Syria, including special forces, to keep up this momentum. They're not going to be leading the fight on the ground, but they will be essential in providing the training and assisting local forces that continue to drive ISIL back.

So make no mistake. These terrorists will learn the same lesson as others before them have, which is, your hatred is no match for our nations united in the defense of our way of life. And just as we remain relentless on the military front, we're not going to give up on diplomacy to end the civil war in Syria, because the suffering of the Syrian people has to end, and that requires an effective political transition.

But this remains a difficult fight, and none of us can solve this problem by ourselves. Even as European countries make important contributions against ISIL, Europe, including NATO, can still do more. So I've spoken to Chancellor Merkel, and I'll be meeting later with the Presidents of France and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain and of Italy. In Syria and Iraq, we need more nations contributing to the air campaign. We need more nations contributing trainers to help build up local forces in Iraq. We need more nations to contribute economic assistance to Iraq so it can stabilize liberated areas and break the cycle of violent extremism so that ISIL cannot come back.

These terrorists are doing everything in their power to strike our cities and kill our citizens, so we need to do everything in our power

to stop them. And that includes closing gaps so terrorists can't pull off attacks like those in Paris and Brussels.

Which brings me to one other point. Europeans, like Americans, cherish your privacy. And many are skeptical about governments collecting and sharing information, for good reason. That skepticism is healthy. Germans remember their history of government surveillance; so do Americans, by the way, particularly those who were fighting on behalf of civil rights. So it's part of our democracies to want to make sure our governments are accountable.

But I want to say this to young people who value their privacy and spend a lot of time on their phones: The threat of terrorism is real. In the United States, I've worked to reform our surveillance programs to ensure that they're consistent with the rule of law and upholding our values, like privacy. And by the way, we include the privacy of people outside of the United States. We care about Europeans' privacy, not just Americans' privacy.

But I also, in working on these issues, have come to recognize security and privacy don't have to be a contradiction. We can protect both. And we have to. If we truly value our liberty, then we have to take the steps that are necessary to share information and intelligence within Europe, as well as between the United States and Europe, to stop terrorists from traveling and crossing borders and killing innocent people.

And as today's diffuse threats evolve, our alliance has to evolve. So we're going to have a NATO summit this summer in Warsaw, and I will insist that all of us need to meet our responsibilities, united, together. That means standing with the people of Afghanistan as they build their security forces and push back against violent extremism. It means more ships in the Aegean to shut down criminal networks who are profiting by smuggling desperate families and children.

And that said, NATO's central mission is and always will be our solemn duty: our article 5 commitment to our common defense. That's why we'll continue to bolster the defense of our frontline allies in Poland and Romania and the Baltic States.

So we have to both make sure that NATO carries out its traditional mission, but also to meet the threats of NATO's southern flank. We have to defend the security of every ally. That's why we need to stay nimble and make sure our forces are interoperable and invest in new capabilities like cyberdefense and missile defense. And that's why every NATO member should be contributing its full share—2 percent of GDP—towards our common security, something that doesn't always happen. And I'll be honest, sometimes, Europe has been complacent about its own defense.

Now, just as we stand firm in our own defense, we have to uphold our most basic principles of our international order, and that's a principle that nations like Ukraine have the right to choose their own destiny. Remember that it was Ukrainians on the Maidan, many of them your age, reaching out for a future with Europe that prompted Russia to send in its military. After all that Europe endured in the 20th century, we must not allow borders to be redrawn by brute force in the 21st century. So we should keep helping Ukraine with its reforms to improve its economy and consolidate its democracy and modernize its forces to protect its independence.

And I want good relations with Russia and have invested a lot in good relations with Russia. But we need to keep sanctions on Russia in place until Russia fully implements the Minsk agreements that Chancellor Merkel and President Hollande and others have worked so hard to maintain and provide a path for a political resolution of this issue. And ultimately, it is my fervent hope that Russia recognizes that true greatness comes not from bullying neighbors, but by working with the world, which is the only way to deliver lasting economic growth and progress to the Russian people.

Now, our collective security rests on a foundation of prosperity, so that brings me to my next point. The world needs a prosperous and growing Europe, not just a strong Europe, but a prosperous and growing Europe that generates good jobs and wages for its people.

As I mentioned before, the economic anxieties many feel today on both sides of the Atlantic are real. The disruptive changes brought about by the global economy, unfortunately, sometimes are hitting certain groups, especially working class communities, more heavily. And if neither the burdens, nor the benefits of our global economy are being fairy distributed, it's no wonder that people rise up and reject globalization. If there are too few winners and too many losers as the global economy integrates, people are going to push back.

So all of us in positions of power have a responsibility—as leaders of government and business and civil society—to help people realize the promise of economic and security in this integrated economy. And the good news is, we know how to do it. Sometimes, we just lack the political will to do it.

In the United States, our economy is growing again, but the United States can't be the sole engine of global growth. And countries should not have to choose between responding to crises and investing in their people. So we need to pursue reforms to position us for long-term prosperity and support demand and invest in the future. All of our countries, for example, could be investing more in infrastructure. All of our countries need to invest in science and research and development that sparks new innovation and new industries. All of our countries have to invest in our young people and make sure that they have the skills and the training and the education they need to adapt to this rapidly changing world. All of our countries need to worry about inequality and make sure that workers are getting a fair share of the incredible productivity that technology and global supply chains are producing.

But if you're really concerned about inequality, if you're really concerned about the plight of workers, if you're a progressive, it's my firm belief that you can't turn inward. That's not the right answer. We have to keep increasing the trade and investment that supports jobs, as we're working to do between the United States and the EU. We need to keep implementing reforms to our banking and financial systems so that the excesses and abuses that triggered the financial crisis never happen again.

But we can't do that individually, nation by nation, because finance now is transnational. It moves around too fast. If we're not coordinating between Europe and the United States and Asia, then it won't work.

As the world's been reminded in recent weeks, we need to close loopholes that allow corporations and wealthy individuals to avoid paying their fair share of taxes through tax havens and tax avoidance, trillions of dollars that could be going towards pressing needs like education and health care and infrastructure. But to do that, we have to work together.

Here in Europe, as you work to strengthen your Union—including through labor and banking reforms and by ensuring growth across the euro zone—you will have the staunch support of the United States. But you're going to have to do it together, because your economies are too integrated to try to solve these problems on your own. And I want to repeat: We have to confront the injustice of widening economic inequality. But that is going to require collective work, because capital is mobile, and if only a few countries are worrying about it, then a lot of businesses will head towards places that don't care about it quite as much.

For a lot of years, it was thought that countries had to choose between economic growth and economic inclusion. Now we know the truth: When wealth is increasingly concentrated among the few at the top, it's not only a moral challenge to us, but it actually drags down a country's growth potential. We need growth that is broad and lifts everybody up. We need tax policies that do right by working families.

And those like me who support European unity and free trade also have a profound responsibility to champion strong protections for workers: a living wage and the right to organize and a strong safety net and a commitment to protect consumers and the environment upon which we all depend. If we really want to reduce inequality, we've got to make sure everyone who works hard gets a fair shot—and that's especially true for young people like you—with

education and job training and quality health care and good wages. And that includes, by the way, making sure that there's equal pay for equal work for women.

The point is, we have to reform many of our economies. But the answer to reform is not to start cutting ourselves off from each other. Rather, it's to work together. And this brings me back to where I began. The world depends upon a democratic Europe that upholds the principles of pluralism and diversity and freedom that are our common creed. As free peoples, we cannot allow the forces that I've described—fears about security or economic anxieties—to undermine our commitment to the universal values that are the source of our strength.

Democracy, I understand, can be messy. It can be slow. It can be frustrating. I know that. I have to deal with a Congress. [*Laughter*] We have to constantly work to make sure government is not a collection of distant, detached institutions, but is connected and responsive to the everyday concerns of our people. There's no doubt that how a united Europe works together can be improved. But look around the world at authoritarian governments and theocracies that rule by fear and oppression. And there is no doubt that democracy is still the most just and effective form of government ever created.

And when I talk about democracy, I don't just mean elections. Because there are a number of countries where people get 70, 80 percent of the vote, but they control all the media and the judiciary, and civil society organizations and NGOs can't organize and have to be registered and are intimidated. I mean real democracy, the sort that we see here in Europe and in the United States. So we have to be vigilant in defense of these pillars of democracy: not just elections, but rule of law, as well as fair elections, a free press, vibrant civil societies where citizens can work for change.

And we should be suspicious of those who claim to have the interests of Europe at heart and yet don't practice the very values that are essential to Europe, that have made freedom in Europe so real.

So yes, these are unsettling times. And when the future is uncertain, there seems to be an instinct in our human nature to withdraw to the perceived comfort and security of our own tribe, our own sect, our own nationality, people who look like us, sound like us. But in today's world, more than any time in human history, that is a false comfort. It pits people against one another because of what they look or how they pray or who they love. And yet we know where that kind of twisted thinking can lead. It can lead to oppression. It can lead to segregation and internment camps and to the Shoah and Srebrenica.

In the United States, we've long wrestled with questions of race and integration, and we do to this day. And we still have a lot of work to do. But our progress allows somebody like me to now stand here as President of the United States. That's because we committed ourselves to a larger ideal, one based on a creed—and not a race, not a nationality—a set of principles, truths that we held to be self-evident: that all men were created equal. And now, as Europe confronts questions of immigration and religion and assimilation, I want you to remember that our countries are stronger, they are more secure and more successful when we welcome and integrate people of all backgrounds and faith and make them feel as one. And that includes our fellow citizens who are Muslim.

Look, the sudden arrival of so many people from beyond our borders, especially when their cultures are very different, that can be daunting. We have immigration issues in the United States as well, along our southern border of the United States and from people arriving from all around the world who get a visa and decide they want to stay. And I know the politics of immigration and refugees is hard. It's hard everywhere, in every country. And just as a handful of neighborhoods shouldn't bear all the burden of refugee resettlement, neither should any one nation. All of us have to step up, all of us have to share this responsibility. That includes the United States.

But even as we take steps that are required to ensure our security; even as we help Turkey

and Greece cope with this influx in a way that is safe and humane; even as Chancellor Merkel and other European leaders work for an orderly immigration and resettlement process, rather than a disorderly one; even as we all need to collectively do more to invest in the sustainable development and governance in those nations from which people are fleeing so that they can succeed and prosper in their own countries and so that we can reduce the conflicts that cause so much of the refugee crisis around the world—Chancellor Merkel and others have eloquently reminded us that we cannot turn our backs on our fellow human beings who are here now and need our help now. We have to uphold our values not just when it's easy, but when it's hard.

In Germany, more than anywhere else, we learned that what the world needs is not more walls. We can't define ourselves by the barriers we build to keep people out or to keep people in. At every crossroads in our history, we've moved forward when we acted on those timeless ideals that tells us to be open to one another and to respect the dignity of every human being.

And I think of so many Germans and people across Europe who have welcomed migrants into their homes because, as one woman in Berlin said, "we needed to do something." Just that human impulse to help. And I think of the refugee who said, "I want to teach my kids the value of working." That human impulse to see the next generation have hope. All of us can be guided by the empathy and compassion of His Holiness Pope Francis, who said, "Refugees are not numbers, they are people who have faces, names, stories, and [they] need to be treated as such."

And I know it may seem easy for me to say all this, living on the other side of the ocean. And I know that some will call it blind hope when I say that I am confident that the forces that bind Europe together are ultimately much stronger than those trying to pull you apart. But hope is not blind when it is rooted in the memory of all that you've already overcome—your parents, your grandparents.

So I say to you, the people of Europe, don't forget who you are. You are the heirs to a struggle for freedom. You're the Germans, the French, the Dutch, the Belgians, the Luxembourgers, the Italians, and yes, the British, who rose above old divisions and put Europe on the path to union.

You're the Poles of Solidarity and the Czechs and Slovaks who waged a Velvet Revolution. You're the Latvians and Lithuanians and Estonians who linked hands in a great human chain of freedom. You're the Hungarians and Austrians who cut through borders of barbed wire. And you're the Berliners who, on that November night, finally tore down that wall. You're the people of Madrid and London who faced down bombings and refused to give in to fear.

And you are the Parisians who, later this year, plan to reopen the Bataclan. You're the people of Brussels, in a square of flowers and flags, including one Belgian who offered a message: We need "more." More understanding. More dialogue. More humanity.

That's who you are. United, together. You are Europe: "United in diversity," guided by the ideals that have lit the world, and stronger when you stand as one.

As you go forward, you can be confident that your greatest ally and friend, the United States of America, stands with you, shoulder to shoulder, now and forever. Because a united Europe, once the dream of a few, remains the hope of the many and a necessity for us all.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:22 a.m. in Building 35 at the Hannover Messe Fairgrounds. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Stephan Weil of Lower Saxony, Germany; President François Hollande of France; Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of Italy; and Windsor, Canada, resident Ahmad Abu Nokta, a Syrian artist who fled the southwestern city of Daraa with his wife and four children in 2013. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks on Presenting the Commander in Chief's Trophy to the United States Naval Academy Midshipmen

April 27, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Please have a seat. Welcome to the White House. To Coach Ken and the Navy Midshipmen, I should say welcome back. At this point, you should just add this date to your football schedule every year. [*Laughter*] Air Force game, Army game, bowl game, White House visit. [*Laughter*]

We do have some special guests here today that I want to acknowledge. Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus is here. We've got Admiral John Richardson. We have Superintendent Ted Carter, Jr., and Athletic Director Chet Gladchuk.

Now, Navy Football has now won the service academy rivalry 10 of the last 13 years. In that time, they've won 24 of their last 27 games against Air Force and Army. Maybe it's a good thing this trophy just stays in one place so often, because it's huge. [*Laughter*]

But I know winning the Commander in Chief Trophy means a lot to this team, and it means a lot to me because it shares its name with the most important responsibility that I have. No disrespect to Vince Lombardi or Lord Stanley, but this trophy means a little more to me personally.

I am the eighth President to award this trophy, and this is the eighth and final time that I will do it. And what better way than by honoring this historic Navy Academy team? This squad wasn't just the best service academy on the gridiron this year, it was one of the best teams in America.

The team's cocaptains, Bernie Sarra and Keenan Reynolds, had a couple of mottos that I really like. The first one was "one-and-oh," a reminder to take each game one at a time. So they started the season 1–0 with a 38-point blowout. They went 1–0 against Air Force in another rout. For the 14th straight year, they went 1–0 against Army to reclaim this trophy, and then Navy went 1–0 in the Military Bowl.

All those "one-and-ohs" added up to 11 wins, which is more than any Navy team in history. And Navy's been playing football a long time—about as long as we've had the lightbulb. [*Laughter*] For 4—in 4 years, these seniors have won more games than any Navy team since the class of 1909. They've won this trophy three times, won three bowl games, and has anybody here ever lost to Army? [*Laughter*] That's sort of a deafening silence there.

The team's second motto that I like is something Coach Ken would remind his players at halftime: "You don't have to do anything special, just do your job." "Just do your job"—I really like that slogan.

In doing their jobs, these players did something special. And that's especially true for the anchor of this Navy team, Keenan Reynolds, one of college football's alltime greats. The only quarterback in the 125-year history of the Army-Navy rivalry to win the game 4 times; holds 11 NCAA records, including most rushing yards by a quarterback; with his 88 touchdowns, no one in college football history has been in the end zone more times than Navy's number 19. And in honor of his leadership, both on and off the field, no one will ever wear it again, which is not bad for a guy who started out as the third-string quarterback.

If you ask him which record he's most proud of, Keenan will tell you that it's the team record for wins. Of course, he'd say that. But here's how I know he means it. When Navy played Memphis in Keenan's home State of Tennessee, hundreds of his friends and relatives came out. They wanted to see him break the touchdown record. On Navy's last drive, the Mids were on the 1-yard line. Keenan was one score away. Coach called in a QB sneak, but Keenan called an audible and tossed a touchdown to running back Demond Brown. So you knew he meant it when he said that what he cared about was the team.

Navy also dominated this year thanks to Chris Swain—or the "Swain Train"—[*laughter*]—who racked up a thousand yards. Austin Grebe, who kicked more extra points than any Midshipman in history. And the calm and quiet

wrecking ball at defensive end, Will Anthony, who led the team in sacks.

So these players are just as impressive off the field. In February, Myer Krah went to Flint to hand out water bottles. Just last week, Myer and Troy Thompson visited with junior high students at Washington Jesuit Academy, a first-rate middle school in a low-income community here in DC.

E.K. Binns was a finalist for "Academic Heisman." Wideout Thomas Wilson is a first-team Academic All-American. But most importantly, in a few months, 17 of these seniors will be ensigns, and 15 will be commissioned second lieutenants in the Marine Corps.

They'll be joined in their service by another historic group of Midshipmen who are here today, and I wanted to give them a little bit of credit because we, on this day, celebrate football, but we've got a lot of extraordinary folks at the Naval Academy, and we are welcoming today the first students ever to graduate with a degree in cyber ops. And their expertise is going to be more critical than ever to our national security, so we're very, very proud of them, and we want to congratulate them.

Look, the rivalry between our service academies can get heated. But it is healthy and rooted in respect. They learn early on what it takes to be the best. And that's what matters when you're part of the finest fighting force that the world has ever seen. As your Commander in Chief, and as one of the Americans you risk your lives to defend, I will continue to do my best to support all the men and women who have the distinction of wearing this Nation's uniform.

For more than a century, Navy's mascot has been a goat. After what this year's team accomplished, I think you could say that maybe that stands for "Greatest of All Time." [*Laughter*]

So I want to congratulate Navy. Thank you for your service. Good luck getting this thing back to Annapolis. I don't know if you have, like, a big truck bed that you're going to be using. [*Laughter*] But most importantly, to all of you, I could not be prouder of your commitment and your dedication to this Nation, to our security, and to our freedom.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Let's make sure that we get a good picture here. [*Laughter*]

Coach, anything you want to add here? Come on.

Head Coach Ken Niumatalolo. Thank you. Mr. President, it's always an honor for us to come to the White House. We take great pride in the fact that we've been here pretty much for your entire Presidency. [*Laughter*]

Thank you for your service to our country. But for me, the greatest legacy that you'll leave is that of being a father and a husband. Nobody could ever question or argue that this President loves and honors his wife and children. And so we thank you for your service to our country.

I know there have been a lot of great sports programs that have come here to the White House, but as you said, this team is different. We have 32 seniors behind us that have volunteered to serve you, to serve our country, and we're so grateful for that. But behind you is the greatest senior class in the history of Navy football, and they are ready and willing to serve and to follow you as our Commander in Chief and as our head coach.

So thank you. *Fa'afetai tele lava* and *mahala nui loa*.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:47 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John M. Richardson, USN; and Bernard Sarra, nose guard, Chris Swain, fullback, Myer Krah, outside linebacker, Troy Thompson, quarterback, and E.K. Binns, outside guard, U.S. Naval Academy Midshipmen.

Statement on the Georgia Legislature's Passage of Criminal Justice Reform Legislation
April 27, 2016

I applaud Georgia, and Governor Nathan Deal, for demonstrating that making our criminal justice system more fair is a bipartisan idea. Georgia's latest reform bill touches on school discipline, correctional education for youth, the accuracy of criminal records, fees and fines, and occupational licensing. From the community to the cell block to the courtroom, this bill will both enhance justice and promote safety, serving as an example for the Nation. I hope Georgia's progress will encourage Congress to send me a significant criminal justice bill soon.

Remarks to College Reporters and a Question-and-Answer Session
April 28, 2016

[*The President joined White House Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest's briefing with college reporters in progress*.]

The President. Hey!

Press Secretary Earnest. Oh, well——

The President. I hear there's some hotshot journalists here.

Press Secretary Earnest. Here, let me move this—[*inaudible*].

The President. Josh was speaking for me, and I wanted to make sure he was getting it right. How's it going, everybody?

Audience members. Good!

The President. Are you guys having an interesting time here?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Was Josh thorough in his briefing?

Audience member. Yes.

The President. Well, I heard you guys were around today, so I wanted to stop by and say hello. I also have a bit of breaking news for you, and then I might take some questions.

I heard—overheard Josh talking about student loans, and I know that's a big priority for a lot of your listeners and readers. And that's one of the reasons why my administration has spent a lot of time focused on college affordability. So we expanded Pell grants to make sure that more young people could access it. We created the "Pay As You Earn" program that ensures that people can cap the amount that they're repaying on their loans each month, and—so that young people who want to go into jobs that don't—aren't as lucrative are still able to pursue their passions and their dreams while managing their debt load.

Today I want to announce that we're aiming to enroll 2 million more people in "Pay As You Earn" by this time next year, and you can find out how at studentloans.gov/repay. That's studentloans.gov/repay. And we're also going to be making some additional announcements about how we're going to get our agencies coordinating so that, as young people are managing their student loan debt, there's one-stop shopping, they can figure out how to do it, and they can make sure that there are consumer protections in terms of how they're being treated in the repayment process.

While I have you here, I might as well mention a couple other things. [*Laughter*] You may have heard that there is a Supreme Court vacancy. For those of you who have been studying our system of government, we have three branches, and one of the most important is the judiciary. And right now our Supreme Court is absent one sitting member, with the passing of Justice Scalia. I've nominated an individual named Merrick Garland, who's currently the Chief Judge on the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, which is the second most important court in the land. By all accounts, he's extremely well qualified.

And traditionally, what's happened is, is that the Senate then, exercising its constitutional duties of advise and consent, will meet with the

judge and then have a hearing for him and then have a vote. In part because politics have gotten so polarized lately and the importance of this seat, so far, at least, the Republican leader on the Senate side, Mitch McConnell, has refused to have the Republican caucus meet with him and schedule an actual vote, although, to their credit, there have been a number of Republicans who have broken ranks and gone ahead and met with Judge Garland.

I mention this because I think it's important for all of you, while you're in town, and many of you who are going to end up being journalists covering important national policy, to recognize that our system only works when, even when we have big disagreements, even when there are big policy disputes, there's still a willingness to follow the rules and treat people fairly, especially those who are on the other side of the debate. That's something that's been lost a little bit in this town of late.

And as I said at my State of the Union Address, my hope is, is that despite some of the unusual rhetoric that we've been hearing during this Presidential campaign, that it's young people like you who are going to restore that sense of us being able to work together and make this democracy function effectively. And journalists are—play a critical role in that. Sometimes, both Josh and I probably have our disagreements with the press corps and feel picked on or misunderstood—[*laughter*]—but the truth of the matter is—and I've said this before—what separates us out in part from a lot of other countries in the world is, we've got this incredible free press that pokes and prods and calls into account our leaders. And that is how we can make sure that leaders are accountable to the people who elect them. And that's how we make sure that you don't see major abuses of power, and when you do, that, in fact, the American people know about it and are able to make changes.

And so you guys are going to have a critical role, those of you who end up following journalism. I hope many of you do. I want to thank the White House press corps, because I understand they gave you a lot of time today. And some of the best journalists in the country operate here. I normally don't say nice things about them in front of them—[*laughter*]—but I figured since they took the time to work with you today, I wanted to make sure to acknowledge the great work that they are doing.

All right? So with that, I'm going to take a couple of questions. [*Laughter*]

All right, let's see. We'll start with that young man right there in the black suit—or blue, I guess. [*Laughter*] Well, no, no, right here, right here in the red tie. But I may get to—I may get to you too, so—[*laughter*].

Presidential Interview Request

Q. Mr. President, it's a pleasure to meet you. My name is Dan Corey, and I'm the editor in chief of the Daily Targum. It's the second oldest college newspaper in the United States. And it serves the Rutgers University–New Brunswick community.

The President. Outstanding.

Q. We recently ran a student referendum to keep our presence on campus. We've asked and we are allowed to continue publishing. And we're actually going to reach a historic 150 years of publication.

The President. Congratulations.

Q. Thank you very much. I'm also very nervous right now, but—[*laughter*].

The President. You're doing great so far. [*Laughter*] Just never admit that you're nervous. [*Laughter*] Just pretend like this is routine. [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, in light of the news of you speaking at our commencement, I was wondering, would you be interested in being interviewed by our newspaper? [*Laughter*]

The President. That's a good use of your time right there. [*Laughter*] I have to say that normally I coordinate carefully with my press team before we grant interviews, but I am favorably disposed towards giving you a little bit of time. It may not be a really long interview, but I figure we could give the college newspaper a little bit of——

Press Secretary Earnest. That's a good idea.

The President. ——little bit of play. So all right? Young lady, right here.

Drinking Water Crisis in Flint, Michigan/Infrastructure/Environment

Q. Mr. President, it's an absolute pleasure. My name is Emily Archacki reporting for the Spectrum newspaper—[*inaudible*]—Sacred Heart University. My question is, you announced the other day that you'll be visiting Flint, Michigan——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——based on a letter received from a young girl. What are you planning to do during your visit there? And have you heard from the girl in response to your visit? And if possible, after, may I take a photo with you? [*Laughter*]

The President. All right, the photo I can't do, because if I do, then I've got a long line.

Q. Okay, I figured that was the case.

The President. But I will be visiting Flint. And obviously, since the news of the terrible things that have been taking place there—the lead in the drinking water and the potential health hazards, as well as the people who were responsible for the health and safety of those residents not carrying out their duties the way they need to—I think it's important not only for us to have responded as we have, with FEMA, and—that's the Federal Emergency Management Agency that responds to a lot of problems like this—it's important not only that we are helping the city plan over the long term, but I think it's also important for me to shine a spotlight on the fact that Flint, although extreme, is not unique; that we have underinvested in some of our basic infrastructure that we rely on for our public health. And hopefully, it will give me a chance to speak to the Nation as a whole about how we need to ensure that our air is clean, our water is clean, and that our kids are safe. And I hope I get a chance to meet that young lady as well.

Q. Thank you.

The President. All right, young man right here.

The President's Achievements/Presidential Library/President's Plans After Leaving Office

Q. Hello, Mr. Obama, it's a pleasure. I'm Jessy Diamba from the University of North Texas, and I just had two questions for you. First of all, what is your proudest achievement you've achieved here in these 8 years? And after January 20, what are your goals or plans after you leave the White House?

The President. Well, I'm proud of a lot of stuff: providing health insurance to 20 million people who didn't have it and setting us on a path where, hopefully, everybody has health insurance that's affordable and high quality. I'm proud about the work we did to save the economy. Because right after I came in, we were in a freefall and could have experienced a worldwide depression. I'm proud of the reforms we've done on Wall Street to make sure that the recklessness that led to the crisis hopefully doesn't happen again.

I'm proud of the work we've done in education to make sure that millions of kids who previously couldn't afford to go to college can, and that in addition to the work we've done on student debt and reducing that, we've also been doing things to make it—the process of encouraging young people to go to college easier. And I—this is a good time for me to give a shout-out to the First Lady, who, as many of you know, just this week had her annual sign-up, getting young people to apply for the FAFSA form that is the gateway for you to be able to get financial aid. She was up in New York, but it was, I think, a thousand participants nationwide who are helping to let young people know, if are willing to work hard and have a vision for your future, then nothing is preventing you from getting the kind of higher education that you need.

So I'm proud of all that stuff. I—probably, the thing I'm most proud of is that, mainly as the assistant to Michelle Obama—[*laughter*]—I've done—I've raised two daughters who are amazing that—and I'm really, really proud of them. And being able to do that while still focused on my job, I think, is something I'll look back on and appreciate.

I'm really busy right now, so I'm not thinking too much about after the Presidency. Typically, Presidents build libraries, but I'm more interested in the programming, not just a building. And I'm very confident that a lot of the programming that I do will relate to young

people and how I can encourage them to get involved in civic life. All right?

Let's see. I'm trying to alternate boy, girl, boy, girl here—[*laughter*]—just to be fair. Young lady right there, in the red. Yes, you.

Q. Hey, my name is——

The President. Hey! [*Laughter*]

Immigration Reform

Q. My name is Daniella Oropeza, and I'm reporting for NewsWatch Ole Miss at the University of Mississippi. And pending the Supreme Court's decision, will this administration take further action on immigration?

The President. As you know, we took some initial steps to try to make a more rational, smarter immigration process. Our immigration system has been broken for quite some time. On the one hand, you've had some serious work by our administration and previous administrations to slow the flow of undocumented workers across the border, to strengthen border security, to improve how we manage the influx of folks who come in by air, and to make sure that they're not overstaying their visas and so forth.

On the other hand, we also want to remind everybody, this is a nation of immigrants and immigrants—immigration has been a source of strength for our country and that we have people here who may not have initially come here legally, but have since that time put down roots, raised families. They're our neighbors, they're our friends. They may be, in some cases, seeing their sons and daughters go off to war in our country's uniform, and that it doesn't make sense for us to simply pretend like we're going to send all those folks out, and instead, we should bring them out of the shadows and give them a chance to earn legal residence and ultimately citizenship.

So we put forward a plan. Part of it we were able to implement: the "DREAM Act" kids who we were able to make sure were treated like the young Americans that they are. We then had an additional program through administrative action that the Supreme Court put a stay on—or the lower courts put a stay on, and is about to go to the Supreme Court. In part, the process takes a long time generally. With the Supreme Court one Justice short, it will be interesting to see whether or not they can come to a ruling or whether they're—they arrive at a tie, a 4–4 tie. We don't know yet. That's pending.

In the meantime, we're still implementing a number of reforms and changes to make the system—the legal immigration system smoother, not as expensive, fairer to people, to treat families with more respect. We have changed our priorities in terms of enforcement so that we're not deporting and separating families as much and more focused on going after criminals and people who pose a security threat to the community. But our hands are a little bit tied on some of the bigger things until the Supreme Court rules.

Now, even if we do all that, it's critically important that we still push Congress to pass legislation, because my Executive orders can be overturned by the next President. And the only way to have a permanent solution to this problem is for the kind of legislation to pass that we saw the Senate actually pass on a bipartisan basis that would continue to strengthen border security, but also give a pathway to citizenship for those who had been here for quite some time. That way we can be a nation of law and a nation of immigrants, and it's the right thing to do. I'm not optimistic about us getting the legislation done before I leave, given the makeup of this Congress, but I think this is going to be a major issue in the election, and I—people need to pay attention to it.

All right, I'm going to take two more. Two more questions. Let's see. You're all very good-looking people, I've got to say [*Laughter*] The—this gentleman over here. I haven't forgotten about you over there. Go ahead.

Syrian Refugees

Q. My name is Alden Woods, I work for the Indiana Daily Student at Indiana University. My question is about the Syrian refugees.

The President. I thought you were going to ask about basketball "rings." [*Laughter*]

Q. We can do that if you want. [*Laughter*]

The President. No, go ahead.

Q. As the deadline for your pledge to let in 10,000 Syrian refugees gets kind of closer, starting to creep up on us, it looks kind of iffy whether that's going to be made. Do you have any plans to speed up that flow or encourage more Syrian refugees coming in the country?

The President. Well, we're going to keep on pushing. And part of what has made this challenging is that we want to make sure that we can, as much as possible, provide the American people an assurance that everybody here has been vetted at a very high standard.

As you will recall, there was a lot of emotions around our initial announcement that we should be admitting some Syrian refugees, and people making claims that somehow this would be letting potential terrorists onto our shores. The truth of the matter is, is that the refugee process generally is much more rigorous in its screening and its vetting than the average tourist who comes in here. These are people who themselves have been victims of terrorism and victims of incredible violence and suffering at the hands of the Asad regime in Syria.

It is the right thing to do. Our closest friends and allies, like Canada, like Germany and other European countries, as well as countries bordering Syria, like Turkey and Jordan, have taken on an enormous burden. And as the most powerful nation on Earth, it's important for us to do our duty as well here, our humanitarian obligation. And it's important for us to send a signal around the world that we care about these folks.

So administratively, I think now we have the process to speed it up. There are going—may be efforts on the part of Congress to try to block us, but our goal is to continue to try to make the case to Congress and the American people, this is the right thing to do. And we believe that we can hit those marks before the end of the year.

More broadly, one of the things we're going to be doing is, at the United Nations, we're going to convene at the margins of the United Nations General Assembly, which takes place in September every year. We're going to try to make sure that we have an international conference around how we can deal with much larger refugee flows generally. Some of them, as a consequence of conflict, in some cases because of drought or other natural disasters, there are about 60 million displaced people around the world. And I've met with some of them, not just in—those who are fleeing areas like Syria, but also in Southeast Asia and parts of Africa. And a lot of these folks are your age or younger, have the same hopes, dreams, aspirations, and have just been dealt a very bad hand.

We can't solve every problem in the world, but we have to make sure that we take leadership in trying to help stabilize their lives. Okay?

All right, I'll take two more, because I promised that I was going to get that young man who thought I had called on him. Yes, go ahead.

College Affordability

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, for joining us here today. My name is Sonali Seth, and I'm from the University of Southern California, here representing the Daily Trojan. In light of your Pell grant announcement today, it seems like a central tenet of your administration's strategy in addressing college affordability is increasing access to grants and loans. How sustainable would you say the strategy is in addressing the long-term rising trends of the cost of college?

The President. That's a great question. It is not sustainable if the overall cost of college keeps on going up as fast as it's going up. So one of the things that we have to do, even as we make sure that we're providing more access to grants, keeping loans manageable, interest rates at a reasonable level, we still have to work with colleges and universities to figure out new ways to reduce costs. And we've actually seen universities around the country begin experiments that are having some impact. I'll just give you a couple of examples.

I made an announcement a while back about our initiative for making the first 2 years of community college free. That's something that is affordable for most States to do, and we are prepared to help with Federal support. If we are able to do that—and we could just close

a few loopholes that corporations currently use to avoid paying taxes to pay for it—then for a large proportion of young people who either get their primary secondary school education from a community college or started at community college and then transferred to a 4-year university for graduation, their costs are being cut anywhere from half to a hundred percent, down to zero. And this is something achievable.

Now, Congress has not moved on our proposal. But what we've also seen is that there have been 27 jurisdictions around the country that have taken us up on this challenge and are doing it themselves, are figuring out ways to make this happen. So that's an—one example.

A second example. Some of you, because I can tell that you guys were high-achieving, type A folks—[*laughter*]—unlike the kind of slacker kid that I was—[*laughter*]—some of you, I suspect, were taking college-credit courses while you were in high school. And what we've seen is, a number of high schools systems—or public school systems partner with community colleges and universities so that they make arrangements. You start taking your college credits while in high school, and you extend your—what seems like high school for an extra year, and when you graduate, you now have an associate's degree, so you have the equivalent of a community college degree. When you then go to a 4-year institution, you have enough credits that you can graduate in 3 years instead of 4. That, again, by eliminating 1 year, means that you've just reduced your costs significantly.

There's been discussion of how can we use technology to cut costs. Are there ways in which we can take the best practices of online learning and make that more accessible for young people who may not have the luxury of being on a campus for 4 years with room and board, might have to work part time because they need to help their families or support themselves? Are there ways that we can make that work?

And we have to be careful about that because there have been some for-profit institutions that, frankly, haven't done a very good job. They take the money, but the young person who—who's taking classes with them doesn't end up getting a degree that's useful for them getting a job, and then they have problems repaying their loans. But there's no doubt that, if done well, that technology potentially can reduce costs.

And then we're talking to colleges and universities about what are the contributors to these higher costs. And this may be sensitive to some folks, but I've said this before: If you have the option of cutting your college costs in half, but your dorm rooms aren't quite as nice, or the sports facilities or the student center or the cafeteria aren't as good, is that a deal you're willing to take? And can we figure out how to empower more parents and more students to demand a lower cost option that still gives you a great education, but maybe doesn't have all the bells and whistles to it.

And that's part of the reason why we've put forward this college report card. The idea is just—it provides you online data so that as you're selecting a college or university that you're able to see, all right, what are the costs, what are the graduation rates—all the indicators and benchmarks of getting good value for what you're spending.

And this has been a long-term trend of ever-rising college costs. The good news is, is that through the work that we've done over the last several years, we've started to see some good trends. Delinquencies, hardship deferrals, defaults on student loans have started to go in the—a better direction. They were skyrocketing. Some of that is the improvement of the economy generally; some of it is some of the policies that we've engaged in. But we're going to have to keep on working with universities to make sure that we're doing a smarter, better job in order for the people who are coming behind you to be able to afford college. All right?

Last question. The gentleman right there.

U.S. Political System/Campaign Finance Reform/Voter Participation

Q. Hi, Mr. President. Earlier today we spoke about——

The President. What's your name?

Q. Patrick Forrest from the Fresno City College Rampage.

The President. From the what?

Q. Fresno City College, the Rampage.

The President. Fresno City College. Fantastic.

Q. Earlier today we talked—one thing we talked about was civic engagement and a line you used in the State of the Union Address of "don't give into the cynicism of the day."

The President. Right.

Q. A poll released by Reuters yesterday shows that nearly half of Americans feel that the elections are rigged in some way.

The President. Yes.

Q. Do you—is there any goal or plan for the administration to help revitalize the faith in democracy that is seemingly lacking?

The President. Well, you know what, this is something that I've tried to do ever since I got into public office. As you know, I came into this work as a community organizer and strongly believed that our democracy only works when people participate.

There are a lot of forces that feed cynicism. And there's no dispute that our democracy is not working as well as it should. I can tell you some of the reasons for that. One of it is that we have set up a system for electing State legislatures and Members of Congress that involve the drawing of district lines that are gerrymandered. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the phrase, it basically means that those who are already in power draw the maps in such a way where they can be assured that these are either going to be Democratic seats or Republican seats. And what that's done is, it's made very few seats competitive.

So, for example, in the last election, in 2012, Democrats actually cast substantially more votes in congressional elections, but ended up with substantially fewer seats. And the reason for that is, in 2010, when the census was done and redistricting of congressional and House legislative seats were drawn, Republican Governors and Republican majorities were responsible for drawing most of the seats.

Now, I want to be clear, Democrats aren't blameless on this either. But California, for example, has gone to a process of nonpartisan districting. The advantage there is not only do you make more seats competitive, but it also means that politicians have to compete for everybody's votes because they're not in safe seats, they're not in a safely Republican district or a Democratic district. And what that does is, it means they've got to not just appeal to the extremes of their party.

Part of the reason we've seen polarization and gridlock here in Washington is because there's been this great sorting, and Democrats have moved much further—have moved left. Republicans have just gone way to the right. And it's harder then to compromise, because Members of Congress—and this same thing is true in State legislatures—are always looking over their shoulder seeing if somebody in their own party might challenge them. And then, the system doesn't work.

So that's a big chunk of why people are cynical—because they feel like their don't—their votes don't count. And if you draw districts that are ironclad one party or another, then they're not entirely wrong.

Another reason that people are cynical is money in politics. The Supreme Court issued a ruling, *Citizens United,* that allowed super PACs and very wealthy individuals to just finance all these ads that you guys see on TV all the time. Half the time, nobody knows who's funding them. And that makes you cynical partly because most of this money is spent on negative ads. And so you're just hearing constantly how horrible everybody is. That will make you feel pretty bad about the political process.

And I'm a strong believer in finding ways in which we can make the financing of campaigns more democratic. Now, we've seen some interesting work being done, for—you've got to give Bernie Sanders, for example, credit, building off some of the work that I did. I, in turn, built off the work that Howard Dean did for smaller donations, grassroots donors to be able, in small contributions, to allow candidates to be competitive.

But I think that we don't want to leave that to chance. And that's much harder to do for

Members of Congress who are lower profile so they don't get the sort of viral presence that allows them to raise that kind of money to compete. So we're going to have to solve money in politics.

You as journalists are going to have a role to play in reducing cynicism. It is very hard to get good stories placed. People will assign you stories about what's not working. It's very hard for you to write a story about, wow, this thing really works good.

And just to take the Federal Government as an example, every day, I've got 2 million people who work for the Federal Government—whether in our military, our law enforcement, our environmental protection, helping veterans, et cetera—and they are doing great work. And you rely on it in all kinds of ways, including when you check the weather, because you can thank the National Weather Service for putting satellites up so your smartphones tell you whether to bring an umbrella or not. [*Laughter*] But we just take that for granted.

And if, out of those 2 million employees, one person screws up somewhere—which, every day, you can count on somebody out of 2 million people probably doing something they shouldn't be doing—that's what's going to get reported on. Now, that helps keeps Government on its toes and accountable. But one of the things we have to think about is, how do we tell a story about the things we do together that actually work so that people don't feel so cynical overall?

But look, here's the bottom line, is that—let's take the political process. As cynical as everybody is, and everybody is always trying to come up with these radical new plans to try to fix our democracy, and we need to do this, and we need to do that, the truth is, is that part of the reason why our Government doesn't work as well is because in a good Presidential year, slightly more than half the people vote who are eligible, and the other half don't. And during an off-year election, when the President is not at the top of the ticket and people aren't getting as much attention, 40 percent of the people vote.

Now, this system doesn't work if people opt out. And the easiest cure, the simplest cure for what ails our democracy is everybody voting. Now, it's true that there are some States that purposely make it hard for people to vote. We're the only major democracy in the world that actively makes it hard for people to vote. And so you should be—particularly as—in your student newspapers, as you go back to your home States—you should be asking, why is it that we have laws that are purposely making it harder for people to vote, purposely making it harder for young people to vote.

And there's a political agenda there. The people in power don't want things to change. They want cynicism, because obviously the existing system, as frustrating as it is for everybody else, works for them. Well, if you want to upend that, we've got to vote.

But even in those States that purposely make it harder to vote, the truth of the matter is, on your college campuses, half the folks, maybe two-thirds of the folks who don't vote, don't vote because they're just not paying attention. They don't consider it important. And they're not willing to take the 15 minutes or half hour that it takes to make sure that you're registered and make sure you actually vote.

Well, if you care about climate change, you care about college costs, you care about career opportunities, you care about war and peace and refugees, you can't just complain. You've got to vote. And what's interesting is, is young people as a voting bloc are the least likely to vote, but when you do vote, have the biggest impact on elections.

During a Presidential year, young people account for, like, 19 percent of the total vote. During an off-year election, when folks aren't paying as much attention, they account for 12 percent. And that means that the kinds of candidates that get elected and the priorities that they reflect are entirely different, just based on whether or not you guys are going to the polls.

So don't let people tell you that what you do doesn't matter. It does. Don't give away your power. That should be the main message that you deliver all the time. And it doesn't matter whether it's—you're a Republican, Democrat,

Independent; whether you're conservative on some issues, liberal on others. If you participate and you take the time to be informed about the issues, and you actually turn out and your peers turn out, you change the country. You do. It may not always happen as fast as you'd like, but you'll change it.

So I'll keep on talking about this even after I leave the Presidency. I'm—this is—you got me started. I went on a rant, didn't I? [*Laughter*]

All right. So I'm counting on you guys. Don't let me down, all right? Don't let the country down. You guys are going to be delivering the message to your peer group that this is the greatest country on Earth, but only because we have great citizens who are willing to invest their time and energy and effort to become informed on the issues, to argue about it in a respectful way, and to try to collectively solve the many challenges that we face.

The good news is, is that there are no challenges, as JFK said, that "man creates that man can't solve." I would add women to that. [*Laughter*]

All right? Good luck, guys. Bye-bye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:53 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Flint, MI, resident Mari Copeny; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; Sen. Bernard Sanders, in his capacity as a Democratic Presidential candidate; and former Gov. Howard B. Dean of Vermont, in his capacity as a 2004 Democratic Presidential candidate.

Statement on the Observance of Orthodox Easter
April 29, 2016

Michelle and I extend our best wishes to members of the Orthodox Christian community here in America and around the world as they observe Holy Friday and the Feast of the Resurrection.

For Orthodox Christians, this is a time to remember the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, to rejoice in the victory of the resurrection, and to be transformed by the renewing of our minds in accordance with God's will.

We lift up in prayer the members of the Orthodox community who have been persecuted for their faith and subjected to unspeakable acts of violence, and we seek the release of those who have been kidnapped. We remember those who have been driven from their homelands and who have seen their religious institutions desecrated or destroyed. And we stand in solidarity with Orthodox Christians and people of all faiths and pledge to continue our work to ensure that all people are able to live in peace, justice, and freedom.

During this season of hope, we remember that the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. We wish all who celebrate a blessed Easter.

Remarks at the White House International Jazz Day Concert
April 29, 2016

The President. Well, good evening, everybody!

Audience members. Good evening.

The President. Welcome to the White House! Good-looking crowd. For 5 years, International Jazz Day's main event has been celebrated around the world, from Istanbul to Osaka to Paris. So we couldn't be prouder that this year jazz comes back home to America. I want to thank UNESCO, its Director General, Irina Bokova, and the Thelonious Monk Institute for helping us to put on this unbelievable event. I also want to thank someone who has been a great friend to me and Michelle: UNESCO Ambassador, legendary jazz musician, and all-around cool cat, Herbie Hancock. And our emcee for the evening, who some people think has a pretty good voice, Morgan Freeman.

In 1964, Dizzy Gillespie ran for President—this is a true story—and he said, "When I am

elected President of the United States, my first Executive order will be to change the name of the White House to the Blues House." [*Laughter*] So tonight we're going to do right by Dizzy. We are turning this place into the Blues House. And before anybody calls this executive overreach—[*laughter*]—or some sort of power grab, I want to clarify that I did not issue a new Executive order. [*Laughter*] I just invited all my favorite jazz musicians to play in my backyard, which is one of the great perks of the job.

I don't need to tell this crowd the story of jazz. From humble origins as the music of the Black working class, largely invisible to the mainstream, it went on to become America's most significant artistic contribution to the world. Jazz took shape in that most American of cities, New Orleans, where the rich blend of Spanish and French and Creole and other influences sparked an innovative new sound. By the early 20th century, you could walk down the street of the infamous Storyville district and—maybe as you tried to stay out of trouble—hear the likes of Jelly Roll Morton and King Oliver and, of course, Louis Armstrong.

Over the years, the sound traveled and changed: hot jazz, swing, bebop, Latin, fusion, and experiments that defied labels. But its essence has always remained the same.

Most jazz lovers probably remember the first time this music got into our bones. Maybe it was Miles teaching us to make room for silence, to hear life in the notes that he didn't play; or how Herbie could hang our hearts on a suspended chord; or how Billie's voice, shimmering and shattered, seemed to bend time itself.

And for me, that happened as a child, when my father, who I barely knew, came to visit me for about a month. And in the few weeks that I spent with him, one of the things that he did was take me to my first jazz concert, to see Dave Brubeck in Honolulu, Hawaii, in 1971. And I didn't realize at the time the impact that it had, but the world that that concert opened up for a 10-year-old boy was spectacular. And I was hooked.

Many have said that they've been hooked as well. And perhaps more than any other form of art, jazz is driven by an unmistakably American spirit. It is, in so many ways, the story of our Nation's progress: born out of the struggle of African Americans yearning for freedom; forged in a crucible of cultures, a product of the diversity that would forever define our Nation's greatness; rooted in a common language from which to depart to places unknown. It's both "the ultimate in rugged individualism," to get out on stage with nothing but your instrument and improvise, spontaneously create; and the truest expression of community, the unspoken bond of musicians who take that leap of faith together. There is something fearless and true about jazz. This is truth-telling music.

Jazz is perhaps the most honest reflection of who we are as a nation. Because after all, has there ever been any greater improvisation than America itself? We do it in our own way. We move forward even when the road ahead is uncertain, stubbornly insistent that we'll get to somewhere better and confident that we've got all the right notes up our sleeve.

And that's what's attracted a global audience to this music. It speaks to something universal about our humanity: the restlessness that stirs in every soul, the desire to create with no boundaries.

"Jazz is a good barometer of freedom," Duke Ellington once said. No wonder it has such an outsized imprint on the DNA of global music. It has spread like wildfire across the world, from Africa to Asia. And jazz blended with the bossa nova of Brazil or the tango of Argentina—which, from here on out, I will endeavor to appreciate as a listener and observer, rather than as a dancer. [*Laughter*] It can be heard in—on the Scottish bagpipe, on the Indian sitar. It opened up new exchanges with classical music and with Eastern music, and it can make the oldest folk songs sound new.

Jazz. It's always been where people come together, across seemingly unbridgeable divides. And here at home, before schools and sports, it was jazz that desegregated. Because for so many players, the only thing that mattered was the music.

The same was true around the world. I was recently in Cuba, the first American President

to make that trip in 88 years. And in Havana, you can hear the beautiful sounds of Afro-Cuban jazz and that unlikely marriage of cultures that, a century later, still captivates us. We hope this music will lead to new avenues for dialogue and new collaborations across borders. And if we can keep faith with that spirit, there's no doubt that jazz will live on for generations to come.

So let me stop talking. We've got an all-star lineup of artists from around the country and around the world. Is everybody ready? Let's do this thing. Jazz at the Blues House.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:31 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to actor Morgan Freeman.

The President's Weekly Address
April 30, 2016

Hi, everybody. It's now been 45 days since I nominated Judge Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court. Judge Garland is a man of experience, integrity, and unimpeachable qualifications. Judge Garland is someone who Senate Republicans are on record saying is "a man of accomplishment and keen intellect," a man who's "honest and capable," a man whose "reputation is beyond reproach." Those are all quotes from Republicans in the Senate.

But so far, most Senate Republicans have refused to even meet with Judge Garland, which means they've also refused to do their job and hold a hearing on his nomination or an up-and-down vote. But they've still found time to head home for recess over the next week.

This is an abdication of the Senate's responsibility. Every Supreme Court nominee since 1875 who hasn't withdrawn from the process has received a hearing or a vote. For over 40 years, there's been an average of 67 days between a nomination and a hearing. This time should be no different. This is not about partisan politics, it's about upholding the institutions that make our democracy work.

There's a reason Judge Garland has earned the respect of people from both political parties. As a young lawyer, he left a lucrative private firm to work in public service. He went to oversee the Federal response to the Oklahoma City bombing. For the last 19 years, Judge Garland has served on the DC Circuit Court, often called the second highest court in the land, and for the past 3 years, he's served as that court's Chief Judge. In fact, Judge Merrick Garland has more Federal judicial experience than any other Supreme Court nominee in history. With a brilliant mind, a kind spirit, and a good heart, he has dedicated his life to protecting our rights and ensuring that the voices of everyday Americans are heard.

So there is absolutely no reason for Republican Senators to deny him the basic courtesy of a hearing and a vote, the same courtesy that has been extended to others. This refusal to treat a Supreme Court nomination with the seriousness it deserves is what makes people so cynical about Washington. That's why poll after poll shows a majority of Americans think Senate Republicans should do their job, give Judge Garland a hearing, and give Judge Garland a vote.

For all of our political differences, Americans understand that what unites us is far greater than what divides us. And in the middle of a volatile political season, it is more important than ever that we fulfill our duties—in good faith—as public servants. The Supreme Court must remain above partisan politics. I've done my job. I nominated someone as qualified as Merrick Garland. Now it's time for the Senate to do their job. Give Judge Garland a hearing. Give Judge Garland an up-or-down vote. Treat him—and our democracy—with the respect they deserve.

Thanks for listening, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:20 a.m. on April 29 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on April 30. In the address, the President referred to

Sens. Jeffrey L. Flake and Lindsey O. Graham. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 29, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 30. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner
April 30, 2016

[*As the President entered the stage, the song "Cups" by Anna Kendrick, including the lyrics "You're gonna miss me when I'm gone," was played over the sound system.*]

The President. You can't say it, but you know it's true. [*Laughter*]

Good evening, everybody.

Audience members. Good evening.

The President. It is an honor to be here at my last—and perhaps the last—White House Correspondents' Dinner. [*Laughter*] You all look great. The end of the Republic has never looked better. [*Laughter*]

I do apologize. I know I was a little late tonight. I was running on C.P.T.—[*laughter*]—which stands for "jokes that White people should not make." [*Laughter*] It's a tip for you, Jeff. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, here we are. My eighth and final appearance at this unique event. [*Laughter*] And I am excited. If this material works well, I'm going to use it at Goldman Sachs next year. [*Laughter*] Earn me some serious Tubmans. That's right. [*Laughter*] That's right.

My brilliant and beautiful wife Michelle is here tonight. She looks so happy to be here. [*Laughter*] That's called practice. [*Laughter*] It's like learning to do 3-minute planks. [*Laughter*] She makes it look easy now, but—[*laughter*].

Next year at this time, someone else will be standing here in this very spot, and it's anyone's guess who she will be. [*Laughter*] But standing here, I can't help but be reflective, a little sentimental. Eight years ago, I said it was time to change the tone of our politics. In hindsight, I clearly should have been more specific. [*Laughter*]

Eight years ago, I was a young man, full of idealism and vigor, and look at me now. [*Laughter*] I am gray and grizzled, just counting down the days till my death panel. [*Laughter*] Hillary once questioned whether I'd be ready for a 3 a.m. phone call. Now I'm awake anyway because I've got to go to the bathroom. [*Laughter*] I'm up.

In fact, somebody recently said to me: "Mr. President, you are so yesterday. Justin Trudeau has completely replaced you. He's so handsome, he's so charming. He's the future." And I said, "Justin, just give it a rest." [*Laughter*] I resented that. [*Laughter*]

Meanwhile, Michelle has not aged a day. The only way you can date her in photos is by looking at me. [*Laughter*] Take a look.

Here we are in 2008.

[*At this point, an image of the President and the First Lady was shown.*]

Here we are a few years later.

[*Another image was shown.*]

And this one is from 2 weeks ago. [*Laughter*]

[*An image of the First Lady standing beside a tuxedo-clad skeleton was shown.*]

So time passes. [*Laughter*] In just 6 short months, I will be officially a lame duck, which means Congress now will flat-out reject my authority. [*Laughter*] And Republican leaders won't take my phone calls. And this is going to take some getting used to, it's really going to—it's a curve ball. I don't know what to do with it. [*Laughter*]

Of course, in fact, for months now congressional Republicans have been saying there are things I cannot do in my final year. Unfortunately, this dinner was not one of them. [*Laughter*] But on everything else, it's another story. And you know who you are, Republicans. In fact, I think we've got Republican Senators Tim Scott and Cory Gardner, they're in the house,

which reminds me, security, bar the doors! [*Laughter*] Judge Merrick Garland, come on out, we're going to do this right here, right now. It's like "The Red Wedding." [*Laughter*]

But it's not just Congress. Even some foreign leaders, they've been looking ahead, anticipating my departure. Last week, Prince George showed up to our meeting in his bathrobe. [*Laughter*] That was a slap in the face. [*Laughter*] A clear breach of protocol. [*Laughter*] Although, while in England I did have lunch with Her Majesty the Queen, took in a performance of Shakespeare, hit the links with David Cameron—just in case anybody is still debating whether I'm Black enough, I think that settles the debate. [*Laughter*]

I won't lie: Look, this is a tough transition. It's hard. Key staff are now starting to leave the White House. Even reporters have left me. Savannah Guthrie, she's left the White House Press Corps to host the "Today" show. Norah O'Donnell left the briefing room to host "CBS This Morning." Jake Tapper left journalism to join CNN. [*Laughter*]

But the prospect of leaving the White House is a mixed bag. You might have heard that someone jumped the White House fence last week, but I have to give Secret Service credit. They found Michelle, brought her back, she's safe back at home now. [*Laughter*] It's only 9 more months, baby. Settle down. [*Laughter*]

And yet, somehow, despite all this, despite the churn, in my final year, my approval ratings keep going up. [*Laughter*] The last time I was this high, I was trying to decide on my major. [*Laughter*] And here's the thing: I haven't really done anything differently. So it's odd. Even my aides can't explain the rising poll numbers. What has changed? Nobody can figure it out. [*Laughter*]

[*Images of Republican Presidential candidates Sen. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz and Donald J. Trump were shown.*]

Puzzling. Anyway, in this last year I do have more appreciation for those who have been with me on this amazing ride, like one of our finest public servants, Joe Biden. God bless him. Love that guy. I love Joe Biden, I really do. And I want to thank him for his friendship, for his counsel, for always giving it to me straight, for not shooting anybody in the face. [*Laughter*] Thank you, Joe. [*Laughter*]

Also, I would be remiss—let's give it up for our host, Larry Wilmore, also known as one of the two Black guys who is not Jon Stewart. [*Laughter*] You're the South African guy, right? [*Laughter*] I love Larry. And his parents are here, who are from Evanston, which is a great town.

I also would like to acknowledge some of the award-winning reporters that we have with us here tonight: Rachel McAdams, Mark Ruffalo, Liev Schreiber. [*Laughter*] Thank you all for everything that you've done. [*Laughter*] I'm just joking. As you know, "Spotlight" is a film, a movie about investigative journalists with the resources and the autonomy to chase down the truth and hold the powerful accountable. Best fantasy film since "Star Wars." [*Laughter*] Look, that was maybe a cheap shot. [*Laughter*]

I understand the news business is tough these days, it keeps changing all the time. Every year at this dinner, somebody makes a joke about BuzzFeed, for example, changing the media landscape. And every year, the Washington Post laughs a little bit less hard. [*Laughter*] Just kind of a silence there—[*laughter*]—especially at the Washington Post table. [*Laughter*]

GOP Chairman Reince Priebus is here as well. Glad to see that you feel that you've earned a night off. [*Laughter*] Congratulations on all your success. The Republican Party, the nomination process, it's all going great. Keep it up. [*Laughter*]

Kendall Jenner is also here. And we had a chance to meet her backstage. She seems like a very nice young woman. I'm not exactly sure what she does, but I am told that my Twitter mentions are about to go through the roof. [*Laughter*]

Helen Mirren is here tonight. I don't even have a joke here. I just think Helen Mirren is awesome. [*Laughter*] She's awesome. [*Laughter*]

Sitting at the same table, I see Mike Bloomberg. Mike, a combative, controversial New York billionaire is leading the GOP primary, and it is not you. [*Laughter*] That has to sting a

little bit. [*Laughter*] Although it's not an entirely fair comparison between you and the Donald. After all, Mike was a big-city mayor. He knows policy in depth. And he's actually worth the amount of money that he says he is. [*Laughter*]

What an election season! For example, we've got the bright new face of the Democratic Party here tonight: Mr. Bernie Sanders! There he is—Bernie! Bernie, you look like a million bucks. [*Laughter*] Or to put it in terms you'll understand, you look like 37,000 donations of $27 each. [*Laughter*]

A lot of folks have been surprised by the Bernie phenomenon, especially his appeal to young people. But not me. I get it. Just recently, a young person came up to me and said she was sick of politicians standing in the way of her dreams. As if we were actually going to let Malia go to Burning Man this year. [*Laughter*] It was not going to happen. [*Laughter*] Bernie might have let her go. [*Laughter*] Not us. [*Laughter*]

I am hurt, though, Bernie, that you've been distancing yourself a little from me. [*Laughter*] I mean, that's just not something that you do to your comrade. [*Laughter*]

Bernie's slogan has helped his campaign catch fire among young people. "Feel the Bern." [*Laughter*] Feel the Bern, it's a good slogan. Hillary's slogan has not had the same effect. Let's see this. [*Laughter*]

[*An image bearing the phrase "Trudge up the Hill" was shown.*]

Look, I've said how much I admire Hillary's toughness, her smarts and her policy chops, her experience. You've got to admit it, though, Hillary trying to appeal to young voters is a little bit like your relative who just signed up for Facebook. [*Laughter*] "Dear America, did you get my poke?" [*Laughter*] "Is it appearing on your wall?" [*Laughter*] "I'm not sure I am using this right. Love, Aunt Hillary." [*Laughter*] It's not entirely persuasive.

Meanwhile, on the Republican side, things are a little more—how should we say this?—a little more loose. Just look at the confusion over the invitations to tonight's dinner. Guests were asked to check whether they wanted steak or fish, but instead, a whole bunch of you wrote in "Paul Ryan." [*Laughter*] That's not an option, people. Steak or fish. [*Laughter*] You may not like steak or fish—[*laughter*]—but that's your choice. [*Laughter*]

Meanwhile, some candidates aren't polling high enough to qualify for their own joke tonight. [*Laughter*]

[*An image of Republican Presidential candidate Gov. John R. Kasich of Ohio was shown.*]

The rules were well-established ahead of time. [*Laughter*]

And then, there's Ted Cruz. Ted had a tough week. He went to Indiana—Hoosier country—stood on a basketball court, and called the hoop a "basketball ring." [*Laughter*] What else is in his lexicon? Baseball sticks? Football hats? [*Laughter*] But sure, I'm the foreign one. [*Laughter*] That's fine.

Well, let me conclude tonight on a more serious note. I want to thank the Washington press corps, I want to thank Carol for all that you do. The free press is central to our democracy, and—nah, I'm just kidding! You know I've got to talk about Trump! Come on! [*Laughter*] We weren't just going to stop there. Come on. [*Laughter*]

Although I am a little hurt that he's not here tonight. We had so much fun the last time. [*Laughter*] And it is surprising. You've got a room full of reporters, celebrities, cameras, and he says no? [*Laughter*] Is this dinner too tacky for the Donald? [*Laughter*] What could he possibly be doing instead? Is he at home, eating a Trump Steak—[*laughter*]—tweeting out insults to Angela Merkel? [*Laughter*] What's he doing? [*Laughter*]

The Republican establishment is incredulous that he is their most likely nominee—incredulous, shocking. They say Donald lacks the foreign policy experience to be President. But in fairness, he has spent years meeting with leaders from around the world: Miss Sweden, Miss Argentina, Miss Azerbaijan. [*Laughter*]

And there's one area where Donald's experience could be invaluable, and that's closing Guantanamo. Because Trump knows a thing or two about running waterfront properties into the ground. [*Laughter*]

All right, that's probably enough. I mean, we—I've got more material.

Audience members. More! More! More!

The President. No, no, I don't want to spend too much time on the Donald. Following your lead, I want to show some restraint. [*Laughter*] Because I think we can all agree that from the start, he's gotten the appropriate amount of coverage, befitting the seriousness of his candidacy. [*Laughter*]

I hope you all are proud of yourselves. [*Laughter*] The guy wanted to give his hotel business a boost, and now we're praying that Cleveland makes it through July. [*Laughter*]

Mm-mm-mm. [*Laughter*] Hmm. [*Laughter*]

As for me and Michelle, we've decided to stay in DC for a couple more years. [*Applause*] Thank you. This way, our youngest daughter can finish up high school, Michelle can stay closer to her plot of carrots. [*Laughter*] She's already making plans to see them every day. Take a look. [*Laughter*]

[*An image of the First Lady watering the White House Vegetable Garden while suspended in midair by a cable was shown.*]

But our decision has actually presented a bit of a dilemma because, traditionally, Presidents don't stick around after they're done. And it's something that I've been brooding about a little bit. Take a look.

[*A video was shown.*]

There you go. I am still waiting for all of you to respond to my invitation to connect to LinkedIn. [*Laughter*] But I know you have jobs to do, which is what really brings us here tonight.

I know that there are times that we've had differences, and that's inherent in our institutional roles. It's true of every President and his press corps. But we've always shared the same goal: to root our public discourse in the truth; to open the doors of this democracy; to do whatever we can to make our country and our world more free and more just. And I've always appreciated the role that you have all played as equal partners in reaching these goals.

And our free press is why we once again recognize the real journalists who uncovered the horrifying scandal and brought about some measure of justice for thousands of victims throughout the world. They are here with us tonight: Sacha Pfeiffer, Mike Rezendes, Walter Robinson, Matt Carroll, and Ben Bradlee, Jr. Please give them a big round of applause.

Our free press is why, once again, we honor Jason Rezaian. As Carol noted, last time this year, we spoke of Jason's courage as he endured the isolation of an Iranian prison. This year, we see that courage in the flesh, and it's a living testament to the very idea of a free press, and a reminder of the rising level of danger and political intimidation and physical threats faced by reporters overseas. And I can make this commitment that as long as I hold this office, my administration will continue to fight for the release of American journalists held against their will, and we will not stop until they see the same freedom as Jason had.

At home and abroad, journalists like all of you engage in the dogged pursuit of informing citizens and holding leaders accountable and making our government of the people possible. And it's an enormous responsibility. And I realize it's an enormous challenge at a time when the economics of the business sometimes incentivize speed over depth; and when controversy and conflict are what most immediately attract readers and viewers.

The good news is, there are so many of you that are pushing against those trends. And as a citizen of this great democracy, I am grateful for that. For this is also a time around the world when some of the fundamental ideals of liberal democracies are under attack and when notions of objectivity and of a free press and of facts and of evidence are trying to be undermined or, in some cases, ignored entirely.

And in such a climate, it's not enough just to give people a megaphone. And that's why your power and your responsibility to dig and to question and to counter distortions and untruths is more important than ever. Taking a stand on behalf of what is true does not require you shedding your objectivity. In fact, it is the essence of good journalism. It affirms the idea

that the only way we can build consensus, the only way that we can move forward as a country, the only way we can help the world mend itself is by agreeing on a baseline of facts when it comes to the challenges that confront us all.

So this night is a testament to all of you who have devoted your lives to that idea, who push to shine a light on the truth every single day. So I want to close my final White House Correspondents' dinner by just saying thank you. I'm very proud of what you've done. It has been an honor and a privilege to work side by side with you to strengthen our democracy.

And with that, I just have two more words to say: Obama out. [*Laughter*]

[*The President performed a "mike drop," intentionally dropping his microphone to the floor.*]

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 p.m. at the Capital Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Jeff Mason, vice president and incoming president, White House Correspondents' Association; former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sen. Bernard Sanders, in their capacity as Democratic Presidential candidates; Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada; Supreme Court Associate Justice–designate Merrick B. Garland; Prince George of Cambridge, son of Prince William and Catherine, Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Queen Elizabeth II, and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom; Reinhold R. "Reince" Priebus, chairman, Republican National Committee; comedian Larry Wilmore, in his capacity as host of Comedy Central's "The Nightly Show," and his parents Larry and Betty Wilmore; Jon Stewart, former host, and Trevor Noah, host, Comedy Central's "The Daily Show"; actors Mark Ruffalo, Liev Schreiber, and Rachel McAdams, who portrayed Boston Globe reporters in the film "Spotlight," about the Boston Globe's investigation into the Catholic Church's sexual abuse scandal; model and television personality Kendall Jenner; actor Helen Mirren; former Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City; Carol E. Lee, president, White House Correspondents' Association; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; reporters Sacha Pfeiffer, Michael Rezendes, Walter Robinson, Matt Carroll, and Benjamin C. Bradlee, Jr., who were portrayed in the film "Spotlight"; and Jason Rezaian, reporter, Washington Post, who was released from detention in Iran in January.

Remarks Honoring the 2016 National Teacher of the Year and State Teachers of the Year
May 3, 2016

The President. Thank you. Well, welcome to the White House. And thank you, Jahana, for that wonderful introduction. Everybody, please give the National Teacher of the Year a big round of applause. It's a little surprising that she got this award because you can tell she's a little shy—[*laughter*]—and lacks enthusiasm. [*Laughter*] And yet somehow, she seems to be performing pretty well in the classroom. [*Laughter*] Look at that smile.

So, for 7 years, I've stood in the White House with America's finest public servants and private-sector innovators and our best advocates and our best athletes and our best artists, and I have to tell you there are few moments that make me prouder than this event when I stand alongside our Nation's best educators. You know, I—[*applause*].

Every year on this day, we say publicly as a country what we should be eager to say every day of the year, and that is, "Thank you." That's what this event is about. That's why it's one of my favorites. It's a good day with all of you guys here in Washington to say thank you for the extraordinary work that teachers do all across the country. It's also, I guess, a pretty good day for substitute teachers because we've got a lot of folks—[*laughter*]—we've got a lot of folks playing hooky today. [*Laughter*] This is a school day. [*Laughter*]

National Teacher of the Year Jahana Hayes. This is a learning opportunity. [*Laughter*]

The President. It's a field trip.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Now, among our country's best educators happens to be our Secretary of Education, Dr. John King, Jr. John is someone who, like Jahana, found refuge in school as a youngster. And he found role models in the classroom at a time when he needed them most. And that experience instilled in him the empathy that makes him such a powerful voice for students and for teachers and for principals and superintendents and educators all across the country.

I also want to acknowledge Jahana's Senator from Connecticut, Chris Murphy. He's around here somewhere. There he is. He's proud of you too.

I want to welcome her fellow Teachers of the Year from all 50 States, DC, and our Territories. And we want to welcome the hundreds of distinguished educators from all across the country that joined us this afternoon. So thank you.

I figured this is the last time I was going to do this, so I wanted to invite as many of you as possible, because you are people who are inspiring at every grade level, who are opening minds to math and music; to basic literacy, but also classic literature; to social studies and science, Spanish and special education.

In their daily lives, the men and women who teach our children fulfill the promise of a nation that's always looking forward, that believes each generation has a responsibility to help the next in building this great country of ours and making the world a better place.

President Kennedy said, "Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education." Now, the school where Jahana teaches happens to bear President Kennedy's name. And it's fitting then that the perspective, the approach that she brings to the classroom suits the philosophy that he articulated.

This is what Jahana said about how she approaches her responsibility: "It doesn't matter how bright a student is or where they rank in a class or what colleges they have been accepted to if they do nothing with their gift to improve the human condition." And Jahana cares about the example she sets as much as the exams that she scores.

[*At this point, Ms. Hayes began to applaud energetically.*]

All right, you just need to settle down. [*Laughter*] This is what makes her a great teacher. You can't be great if you're not enthusiastic. [*Laughter*] You've got to love what you do, and she loves what she does.

And what's remarkable about Jahana's natural talent in the classroom is that when she was growing up in Waterbury, Connecticut, being a teacher was the furthest thing from her mind. In fact, there were times where she didn't even want to be a student.

No one in Jahana's family had gone to college. No one at home particularly encouraged education. She lived in a community full of poverty and violence, high crime and low expectations. And drugs were more accessible than degrees. As a teenager, Jahana became pregnant and wanted to drop out of school. But her teachers saw something. They saw something in her. And they gave her an even greater challenge, and that was to dream bigger and to imagine a better life. And they made her believe she was college material and that she had the special gift to improve not only her own condition, but those around her.

And today, Jahana's principal at Kennedy High says she gets through to her students precisely because she remembers what it's like to be one of them. And she doesn't forget that everyone in her class brings their own different and sometimes difficult circumstances. And she meets them where they are. And she sees a grace in them, and she sees a possibility in them. And because she sees it, they start seeing it.

And that's what makes Jahana more than a teacher; she's a counselor and a confidant. That's how a woman who became a teenage mom is now a mentor to high schoolers in the same city where she grew up.

And meanwhile, outside of the classroom, Jahana has been a leader in the afterschool

theater program. She put together a "Teen Idol" singing show. [*Laughter*] She won the school's "Dancing With the Stars" competition. [*Laughter*] I wish I had met you before I started tangoing in Argentina. [*Laughter*] Could have given me some tips.

And this is something that I think is particularly remarkable: Jahana inspires her students to give back. I think she understands that actually sometimes the less you have, the more valuable it is to see yourself giving, because that shows you the power and the influence that you can bring to bear on the world around you.

One year, she had been assigned to a group that seemed unmotivated, so she found out what was distracting them. Seven students in one class had recently lost a parent to cancer. So she organized a Relay for Life team through the American Cancer Society, and it became an annual event.

Last year, when Jahana went online to register her team, she noticed not 1, not 2, but 14 teams led by former students had already signed up. She organized her students to walk for autism, to feed the homeless, to donate clothes, to clean neighborhoods, and even to register voters. And so it takes a unique leader to get students who don't have a lot to give of themselves. But because Jahana understood those kids, she knew not to set low expectations, but to set high ones and to say to them, you can make a difference.

And that's the kind of leader our Teacher of the Year is. She knows that if students learn their worth, then the class rank and the college acceptances and the exam scores will follow.

Now, if there's one thing Jahana wishes she had in school, it was more teachers who looked like her, as she already mentioned. And so she wrote and won a State grant to inspire more students to become teachers, but especially to recruit more Black and Latino teachers in her district. And that's important.

And not one of the teachers standing behind me or in front of our children's classrooms chose this profession because they were promised a big payday or a short workday. [*Laughter*] Although, you all do need to be paid better. That I believe. But the main reason teachers do what they do is because they love kids. They love our kids. And yes, we should pay teachers more because what they do is invaluable and essential. And the teachers here, though, will tell you that what would be most helpful, in addition to a little financial relief, would be people understanding how important the work you do is and to appreciate it and not take it for granted.

And so part of the reason this event is so important is for us to be able to send a message to future generations of teachers, to talented young people all across the country to understand this is a dream job; that this is an area where you will have more influence potentially than any other profession that you go into.

Audience member. Say it again! [*Laughter*]

The President. This is a profession where you have the potential to make more of a difference than just about anything you can go into.

So, over the past 7 years, we've looked at every element of our education system with an eye towards boosting the teaching profession. And thanks to our educators and the opinions you've voiced and the leadership that you've shown, we've come a long way since we came into office.

One of the first things we did, in the middle of the worst economic crisis in generations, when States and cities were slashing budgets, was to keep more than 300,000 educators in our kids' classrooms. That was part of the Recovery Act.

We've taken the first steps towards making sure every young person in America gets the best start possible. And keep in mind that in 2009, when I started here, only 38 States had their own preschool programs. Today, all but four have. We've expanded Head Start programs for tens of thousands of kids who need it.

We made turning around America's low-performing schools a national priority. The year before I took office, a quarter of our high school students didn't graduate on time. More than a million didn't finish high school at all. And today, high school graduations rates have never been higher, dropout rates have gone

down. We're transforming hundreds of America's lowest performing schools.

We're also bringing new technology and digital tools to our classrooms to modernize and personalize learning. Three years ago, less than a third of all school districts could access high-speed Internet, and a lot of low-income communities were left behind. Today, 20 million more students and most of our school districts have fast broadband and wireless in the classroom. And by 2018, we're going got make sure that we reach the goal I set: 99 percent of our students will have high-speed Internet.

We're making remarkable progress towards my pledge to train 100,000 STEM teachers by 2021 thanks to the great work of "10,000K [100K]* in 10," which, with new commitments to prepare 70,000 more teachers, I want to just announce today, this is a goal that we are going to achieve on time. We're on our way.

And we unleashed a Race to the Top, convincing every State to raise its standards so students are prepared for success in college and for future careers. And we listened to parents who wanted subjects like computer science taught in our schools. And we listened to teachers who have shown why cookie-cutter solutions don't always work. We're empowering States and communities to set their own standards for progress with accountability. And because nobody thinks our students need to spend more time filling in bubbles on standardized tests, we're starting to give educators like those behind me the flexibility to spend more time teaching creatively than they're spending teaching to a test.

Now, that doesn't mean that all our problems are solved. You'd know it better than I do. In too many States, we are underfunding public education. And it is the job of State legislators and of Governors to recognize that the well-being of their State and their communities and their families and their kids requires them to step up. In too many school districts, we still have schools that, despite great efforts by a lot of great teachers, are still not getting our kids prepared the way they need to be prepared. And we've got to be willing to be honest when something is not working and say, all right, let's try something different. And sometimes, we won't necessarily get it right the first time.

But the reason I think—I want to bring this up. This wasn't in my prepared remarks—[*laughter*]—but I think it's important. So often now, the debate swings back and forth. You've got some folks who say resources and money don't make a difference, and the problem is all the teachers' unions. And they want to break up the schools, and they think vouchers are all the answer, or some other approach. And then, on the other side, you've got folks who just know that argument is wrong, but too often it sounds like it's just a defense of the status quo.

And the fact of the matter is, is that we do have to do better in too many of our schools. We need more teachers like this in all of you. We've got to make the profession more attractive. We do have to have accountability in the classroom. That doesn't mean forcing you to teach to the test, but we've got to come up with measures that are meaningful so that if somebody doesn't have the skills that Jahana or these other teachers have, that they can start developing it and we know what to look for. We've got to make sure that we're setting our sights high.

And although I am very proud of the work that we've done, I know we're not there yet. And we may have replaced No Child Left Behind, which was a relief for a lot of folks, but the absence of something that wasn't working as well as it should is not the presence of the kind of work that remains to be done.

So, in our country, it's a little harder than in some other countries, because we've got diverse populations, and we've got folks coming from different backgrounds and starting off in tougher circumstances. But our Teacher of the Year here stands as proof that you can't set expectations high enough for our kids. There's magic in those kids. We just have to find it. We have to unleash it. We have to nurture it. We have to support it. We have to love them. And

* White House correction.

then, we have to tell them precisely because we love you, you're going to work harder—[*laughter*]—and you're going to do better. And we're going to stay on you.

That's what we have to do. And we can't just leave it to the teachers, because if our notion is we drop off our kids and then the teacher is doing everything, and then our job is done, it's not going to work.

So this is why my administration launched Teach To Lead, to give teachers a greater voice in the policies that affect them every day.

And I'm going to close by just talking about a letter I received at the beginning of this school year from a teacher in Central Virginia named Danny Abell.

Audience member. Let's hear it!

The President. There's Danny. That's Danny. There's a reason why he got a good spot—[*laughter*]—because he knew I was going to talk about him. So Danny asked his students if any of them wanted to be a teacher when they grew up. And no one raised their hands. And that worried him. So he wrote me to ask what I'd say if one of my daughters told me she wanted to become a teacher. And I mean this—this is the God's honest truth—if Sasha or Malia wanted to be teachers, I will tell them, I could not be prouder of what you've done. And I'd tell them to be the kind of teachers who don't just show her students how to get the correct answer, but how to be curious about the world and how to care for the people around her and how to analyze facts and evidence and how to tell stories, and how to believe in their ability to shape their own destiny.

In other words, I'd tell her to be like Jahana and to be like each of the educators behind us here today and the kinds of teachers that you see in classrooms in every State and every Territory and the District of Columbia. I'm so proud of all of you for the high standards you set for your students, for your fellow teachers. Thank you for making our Nation stronger.

And now, Jahana, please join me to accept this award from America's educators—the crystal apple—as the National Teacher of the Year.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:35 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Robert A. Johnston, principal, John F. Kennedy High School in Waterbury, CT; and Daniel Abell, teacher, Midlothian High School in Midlothian, VA.

Statement on Education Reform
May 3, 2016

When we came into office at the height of the worst recession in generations, we knew a key to creating true middle class security would be preparing the next generation to compete in the global economy. Thanks to the hard work of our teachers, students, parents, and State and local leaders, that commitment is paying off in new opportunities for our communities and our country.

Today, on National Teacher Appreciation Day, we say thank you to the leaders in our classrooms and reaffirm our shared belief that all children, no matter where they live or what they look like, can grow up to be whatever they want. A world-class education is the single most important factor in making that possible. It determines not just whether our children can compete for the best jobs, but whether America can outcompete other countries.

At the beginning of my Administration, we set an ambitious goal to once again lead the world in our share of college graduates. By reforming our education system from cradle to career, and with the help of a newly announced $100 million down payment to help expand free community college programs and connect college graduates to in-demand jobs, we're on our way to realizing that goal.

We're also proud that high school graduation rates are at an alltime high and dropout rates are at historic lows. Across the board, we're raising expectations for everyone from the Congress to the classroom—but we didn't

stop there. We've also raised standards so they are rigorous and relevant.

It starts in our children's youngest years. We set a goal to expand high-quality early education investments in every child. Over the last three years, 38 states have increased those investments.

We're also making sure our students have access to a well-rounded education—that includes exposure to a variety of classes, from computer skills and reading to science and math. We've cut our schools' digital divide in half, and today 20 million more students—including many in low-income communities—can access high-speed internet and the modern learning tools it provides.

Mindful of the needs of businesses in high-growth and high-demand industries, and true to the principle that a quality education cannot be a privilege for the few, we also proposed a plan that offers two years of free community college to anyone willing to work for it. We're also proud that there are 1 million more black and Latino students in college than there were at the start of my Administration.

At the center of all this progress are the teachers we celebrate year-round, including today. Like those who made a difference in my life, our students' teachers are the ones who help them discover, dream, believe in themselves, and realize the potential our nation promises. That's why one of the most important priorities of my Administration has been to ensure every classroom has a great teacher. To do that, we've reviewed every element of our education system—from standards to assessments to how we train, support, and reward our teachers—to bolster our national effort to improve the teaching profession. As part of that progress, we are on track to train 100,000 more outstanding math and science teachers by 2021.

Our teachers deserve credit for each of our accomplishments and the progress we're continuing to make, from better early education and higher standards to better student performance and higher graduation rates.

Like so many patriotic public servants driven by the reward of giving back, our educators didn't choose their field because of the big paychecks, easy work, or short hours. They are passionate about helping our students realize the best versions of themselves so our country can become the best version of itself. Time and again our teachers have met this solemn responsibility, even as we've asked more of them than ever before.

In our changing world, our sons' and daughters' best job qualification isn't what they do—it's what they know. Our commitment to their education means giving them the knowledge they need to thrive and lead. It is a commitment to prepare them not only to get good jobs, but also to be good citizens—not just to know the correct answer, but to be curious and caring about the world around them.

The future belongs to the nation that best educates its people. If we continue building on the progress we've made over the past seven years, I'm confident we will continue to be that nation.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: The statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as part of a White House and Department of Education report titled "Giving Every Child a Shot: Progress Under the Obama Administration's Education Agenda," in which it was included as the Foreword.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions of the Government of Syria
May 3, 2016

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622(d), provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency, unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary

date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions of the Government of Syria declared in Executive Order (E.O.) 13338 of May 11, 2004—as modified in scope and relied upon for additional steps taken in E.O. 13399 of April 25, 2006, E.O. 13460 of February 13, 2008, E.O. 13572 of April 29, 2011, E.O. 13573 of May 18, 2011, E.O. 13582 of August 17, 2011, E.O. 13606 of April 22, 2012, and E.O. 13608 of May 1, 2012—is to continue in effect beyond May 11, 2016.

The regime's brutal war on the Syrian people, who have been calling for freedom and a representative government, not only endangers the Syrian people themselves, but could yield greater instability throughout the region. The Syrian regime's actions and policies, including pursuing chemical and biological weapons, supporting terrorist organizations, and obstructing the Lebanese government's ability to function effectively, are fostering the rise of extremism and sectarianism and continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue in effect the national emergency declared with respect to this threat and to maintain in force the sanctions to address this national emergency.

In addition, the United States condemns the Asad regime's use of brutal violence and human rights abuses and calls on the Asad regime to stop its violent war, uphold the Cessation of Hostilities, enable the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and allow a political transition in Syria that will forge a credible path to a future of greater freedom, democracy, opportunity, and justice.

The United States will consider changes in the composition, policies, and actions of the Government of Syria in determining whether to continue or terminate this national emergency in the future.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Paul D. Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The letter referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Following a Meeting on the Federal Government's Water Crisis Response Efforts in Flint, Michigan
May 4, 2016

The President. All set? All right. Well, I just had the opportunity to meet with the Federal responders who have been on the ground here in Flint, joined by Governor Rick Snyder and Mayor Karen Weaver. And our discussion underscored how important it was for us to mount a whole-of-government effort across agencies and across levels of government to meet one core mission, and that is make sure that the people of Flint are healthy; that they've got safe water to drink and to use; that we are ensuring that we have a plan for the system to work over the long term; and that we are certain that our kids here in Flint are going to be able to take advantage of their talents and opportunities well into the future.

So we've got a short-term challenge, which is water, but we've also got a long-term challenge, which is making sure that the city of Flint can prosper going forward.

I want to thank everybody who's participating. Everybody here has been working hard on the ground for months now to respond to this crisis. It's an all-hands-on-deck approach. And just to give you some examples of the work that's being done—FEMA is expanding its ac-

cess—is expanding access to water and filters by providing water commodities to the State of Michigan. The EPA has been actively testing and monitoring the city's water and is providing technical assistance to the city to make sure that the water distribution system is safe again. The CDC is investigating concerns that we've heard from people about health symptoms that may have been connected to the water.

Some good news: We're hoping that if it hasn't already happened, that it's going to happen shortly, that legislation is being passed by the State of Michigan that allows the Federal Government, in partnership with the State, to expand access to Medicaid and provide additional services to individuals under 21. So making sure that our kids are covered and have these additional services, as well as pregnant women. And I want to thank the State of Michigan, working with us, to develop that plan.

Thanks to the USDA, and Debbie Stabenow has been outstanding in guiding this. And obviously, the rest of the Michigan congressional delegation have worked hard on this as well. USDA is making sure that infants get the formula that they need and that children are getting access to healthy food.

There are a couple of things that I want to address to the press directly. I'm going to have a chance after this meeting to meet with a number of Flint families so that they can address directly to me their fears and concerns, as well as their hopes, and then I'll have a chance to speak to a larger audience after that. But a couple of things that I want to focus on right now. Number one is that it is really important, particularly with this expansion of Medicaid, that any parent in the city of Flint takes the time to check to make sure that their kids aren't affected, that they don't have elevated lead levels. And I know that that can be hard. Sometimes, folks have difficulty accessing the system. One of the things that we spent a lot of time talking about is, how do we make sure that there is enough community outreach so that people know that there are doctors out there and health providers who will see their children?

But I want everybody in the city of Flint to just know that you should have your child checked, because although lead poisoning or lead impacts can be serious, what is also true is, is that there are a lot of ways to address whatever concerns are raised and to make sure that those kids are healthy and are thriving. So the key is to know, like any other situation where your kid might get sick or have some sort of environmental impact, you've got to know what's going on and then take the steps that are needed to make sure that they get the treatment or the help that they need. And if you don't know, then that could end up leading to problems.

So we're really going to emphasize parents accessing the expanded health care providers that are going to be available here in the city of Flint. That's point number one.

Point number two. I know that there is a lot of suspicion about whether or not the water coming out of people's taps in their homes are safe or whether they are still contaminated and still a problem. And I want to emphasize that the EPA has looked at this very carefully, and they are very confident that if you use a filter, then it is safe for kids over 6. We're still, out of an abundance of caution, recommending bottled water for children who are under the age of 6 or pregnant women. But if you're over 6, then, in fact, filtered water is safe, and it works. And that's not just the opinion of Federal agencies. A lot of independent studies have been done to confirm that the water is safe.

So, working with the State and the city, filters are now available for everybody in this city. And the key is for people to go ahead and access them and use them. And I'm going to emphasize this when I'm speaking to the larger audience: I understand why people might be mistrustful and concerned. But right now it is safe for you to install a filter in your home or to use a standalone filter and to go ahead and drink that water. But you've got to use it. And it's available to you for free. But people have to have confidence that will work.

That doesn't mean that we still don't have to replace a number of the pipes in this city. And the mayor is working hard on a plan to fast-track getting pipe replacement. And the

Governor is budgeting dollars to expand that program. And the congressional delegation of Michigan is working hard so that we get additional funds to help replace those pipes that pose a threat. But that may be a long-term process. It may take a year. It may take 2 years. It might take more to get all the pipes replaced. And in the meantime, folks have to be able to use water. So trust that the tests have been done and the filter system works.

Third point: In order for us to clean out the system, to flush out the contaminants and to have confidence that, as we fix the system, it's actually going to be safe for all the households in Flint, we need everybody in Flint to start helping us flush out that system. And so I guess there's a program called Flush——

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Regina McCarthy. Flush for Flint.

The President. Flush for Flint. [*Laughter*] It's not the most elegant name. [*Laughter*] But the concept is pretty simple if you think about it, and that is, we need everybody to turn on their tap in the kitchen, in the tub, for 5 minutes a day so that the water is running and whatever contaminants are sitting in there start getting pushed out.

And what that allows us to do is then to go back after some water has been running and the flushing has taken place, then the EPA can go back and test some more and see, all right, where are the levels now? How are we doing in terms of coating the pipes? Is—what steps being taken, are they being effective or do additional steps need to be taken? But we're not going to know that if people just let the water sit there.

Now, I understand if people are scared and they're not using their water, that they may wonder why is it up to me to be part of this process of fixing it. But the bottom line is, is if you're not doing your part, then these outstanding folks around the table who want to help can't do theirs.

So I'm urging everybody in Flint to participate in this flushing program. Again, it's a matter of turning on your tap in the kitchen, in the bathroom, 5 minutes a day, just to get that water flowing, getting some of the contaminants out. It will then be retested after that. All right?

Now, these are all short-term issues. And one of the things that we all emphasized here is that the city of Flint had suffered from some hard times and neglect long before this particular crisis. And what I'm encouraged by is, I think, a recognition at every level of government that we have to take what has been a crisis and see if we can turn this into an opportunity to rebuild Flint even better than before.

The problems of water were a symptom of a broader issue, and that is a city that had lost a lot of resources, lost a lot of its tax base, was cutting a lot of services, and increasingly, didn't have capacity. And so our goal here is to use this moment in which everybody's attention is focused to see if we can start rebuilding and moving Flint in a better direction.

I'm confident that we can do that if we're all working together. And I emphasized to the Governor and I emphasized to the mayor that my job here today is not to sort through all the ins and outs of how we got to where we are, but rather to make sure that all of us are focused on what we need to do moving forward on behalf of the children of Flint. That's my priority. And that's got to be all of our priorities.

And there are times for politics, and there are times for turf battles. This is not one of those times. This is where everybody locks arms and is focused on getting the job done. And I'm very proud of the team: Gina McCarthy at the EPA, Secretary Burwell at Health and Human Services, and everybody who is represented around this table. That's their commitment, and that's their order from me. And Dr. Lurie, who's been heading up the Federal response, I think, has been doing a great job in coordination here.

But all of us are going to have to really keep our eye on the ball, even when the cameras go away. That's what we owe to the people of Flint, and that's what we owe to their kids.

Last point: I think people are understandably scared when they hear that their child may have ingested some lead, it may have gotten into their system, and that that may have some

long-term impacts or create particular challenges for kids. But it is really important for all of us to remember that kids are resilient. And every kid in Flint is special and has capacity and can do great things. And the fact that they may have had some drinking water that was contaminated doesn't automatically mean somehow that they're going to have huge problems or that they're not going to be able to reach that potential.

And so for the parents who are out there, I want to emphasize: Get your child checked, but be confident that your child can thrive and will be fine as long as you know what they need and know how to access the resources that they need. It's useful to remember, just to keep things in perspective, that the laws banning lead paint in homes and reducing the lead that was in our environment, those laws really were put in place just a generation ago.

When I was 5 or 6 or 7, a lot of homes still had lead paint in it. I might have ingested some lead paint when I was 2 or 3 years old, because at the time, people didn't know it. So we've got an entire couple of generations of Americans who have done really well despite the fact that they may have had something that is not optimal. And how lead interacts with any particular child is going to be different, and what each child needs is going to be different. And some kids are going to be fine, and they're not going to be affected. Some kids may have more of an—it might have more of an effect.

But the bottom line is, is that we now know what to do. We know how to mitigate these effects. But parents and communities have to be proactive in order to assure that we're doing the right thing by our kids. We can't just sit back and feel panicked and feel scared. Those emotions are understandable. But if we want to make sure that our kids are properly taken care of, then we've got to be proactive and get out of—ahead of this thing.

All right? Thank you again, everybody, for the great work that you guys have done. Thank you, press. I will see you again in the larger rally.

Safety of Filtered Water

Q. Is that water there from Flint, sir?

The President. It is. There you go. Generally, I have not been doing stunts here, but you know—[*laughter*].

[*At this point, the President sipped from a glass of water.*]

The President. And this used a filter. The water around this table was Flint water that was filtered. And it just confirms what we know scientifically, which is that if you're using a filter, if you're installing it, then Flint water at this point is drinkable. That does not—I want to repeat—negate the need for us to go ahead and replace some of these pipes, because ultimately, you want a system in which you don't have to put a filter on it in order to be assured that it's safe.

But as a short-term measure, this is the right thing to do. And, frankly, it's going to be a lot more convenient than people traveling long distances to try to lug back a bunch of bottled water. All right?

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. at the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan.

Remarks in Flint
May 4, 2016

The President. Hello, Flint! How's it going, Wildcats? Well, it is good to be back in Flint, Michigan.

Audience member. Obama!

The President. That's me! Yes. All right, settle down, everybody. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Thank you, sir. I appreciate it. All right, let me do some business here. Let me begin by recognizing some of the guests who are here. Your mayor, Karen Weaver, is here. I know Governor Rick Snyder is here.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, no, no—because he's here to—we're doing some business here. Members of Congress are here, including your outstanding Senator, Debbie Stabenow. Flint's own Dan Kildee is here. Debbie Dingell is here. Brenda Lawrence is here. John Conyers is here. And Sandy Levin. An outstanding Michigan delegation. We've got Secretary Sylvia Burwell, who is the head of Health and Human Services, works for me. And Administrator Gina McCarthy is here as well. I want to thank Superintendent Bilal Tawwab and Principal Tim Green for their hospitality. And I want to thank all of you for being here.

Now, not too long ago, I received a letter from a young lady, an 8-year-old girl named Mari Copeny. You may know her as "Little Miss Flint."

Those of you who have seats, please feel free to sit down so folks can see you—see behind you. If you don't have a seat, don't sit down. [*Laughter*]

And like a lot of you, Mari has been worried about what happened here in Flint. She's worried about what it means for children like her. She's worried about the future of this city and this community.

So in the middle of a tragedy that should have never happened here in the United States of America—the denial of something as basic as clean, safe drinking water—this 8-year-old girl spoke out and marched and, like many of you, protested. As Mari was getting ready to hop on a bus to Washington, she wrote to ask if she could meet with me while she was in town. There she is.

Now, I would have been happy to see Mari in Washington. But when something like this happens, a young girl shouldn't have to go to Washington to be heard. I thought her President should come to Flint to meet with her. And that's why I'm here: to tell you directly that I see you and I hear you, and I want to hear directly from you about how this public health crisis has disrupted your lives, how it's made you angry, how it's made you worried.

And I just had a chance to meet with a few of your neighbors in a roundtable discussion, and I heard from them what I know a lot of you are feeling: that a lot of you are scared; that all of you—feel let down. And I told them that I understood why you'd be afraid, not just for yourself, but for your kids.

I also wanted to come here, though, to tell you that I've got your back, that we're paying attention. So I met and heard directly from those who are leading the Federal response and who are working hard to make sure that Flint is whole again, to make sure that this proud city bounces back not just to where it was, but stronger than ever. And I want all of you to know I am confident that Flint will come back. I will not rest, and I'm going to make sure that the leaders, at every level of government, don't rest until every drop of water that flows to your homes is safe to drink and safe to cook with and safe to bathe in, because that's part of the basic responsibilities of a government in the United States of America.

So, as President, I've sent Flint the best resources our Federal Government has to support our State and local partners, the agencies that serve you; the agencies that specialize in health and housing and those that support small businesses and our kids' education, those that are responsible for the food that our children eat and, of course, the water we drink. Everybody is on duty. The National Guard is on duty. This is a hands-on-deck situation—all hands on deck. Because if there's a child who feels neglected on the north side of Flint or a family on the east side of this city who wonders whether they should give up on their hometown and move away, or an immigrant who wonders whether America means what we say about being a place where we take care of our own, that matters to all of us—not just in Flint, not just in Michigan, but all across America. Flint's recovery is everybody's responsibility. And I'm going to make sure that responsibility is met.

So I just talked with some of the team of responders that are on the ground to make sure that they're coordinating. And they're doing some incredible things. They've distributed enough water to fill more than three Olympic-sized swimming pools. They've distributed thousands of filters. They're helping students

afford nutritious food that work against the contaminants in bad water. They're making sure new moms have access to instant infant formula that doesn't require water. They've expanded health services for children and pregnant women and education programs for Flint's youngest children. They're out there testing homes for lead and testing children for exposure to lead.

But like all our best responses in tough times, this is not a government effort alone. We need our businesses and nonprofits and philanthropies to step up. And what's incredible about Flint is how many volunteers have already been leading the way. You've got members of one union, UA Local 370, that have donated tens of thousands of dollars and 10,000 hours of their time. They've installed thousands of filters, hundreds of faucets by going door to door, night and day. They're not asking for anything in return, they're just doing the right thing.

So many Americans, here in Flint and around the country, have proven that you don't have to be a plumber or a pipefitter to pitch in—although it's very helpful if you're a plumber or pipefitter. [*Laughter*] So, in March, dozens of accountants teamed up with the American Red Cross to help residents recycle all the plastic water bottles that have been piling up. Religious and community groups are organizing supply drives, supporting families, offering free medical services.

The director of a local dance studio, I understand, found a creative way to help; she's letting people use her studio as a space to support one another by sharing their stories and realizing they're not alone. Even inmates at an Indiana prison came together to donate more than $2,500 to the people of Flint. And a second-grader from Virginia, a young man named Isiah Britt, set up a website to see if he could raise $500 for hand sanitizers to send to the kids at Eisenhower Elementary here in Flint. So Isiah, it's fair to say, surpassed his goal, because he raised $15,000. And he explained that the experience taught him, just because you're small "doesn't mean you can't do big things."

So when you think of all those stories, it should be clear that the American people care about Flint. The American people are paying attention, and they care about you. And as is true when disasters strike in other ways, people pitch in, they come together. Because they imagine, "All right, that could have been me." That's the good news.

The bad news is that this should not have happened in the first place. And even though the scope of the response looks sort of like the efforts we're used to seeing after a natural disaster, that's not what this was. This was a man-made disaster. This was avoidable. This was preventable.

Now, I'm not here to go through the full history of what happened. Like a lot of manufacturing towns, Flint's economy has been taking hits for decades now: plants closing, jobs moving away. Manufacturing has shrunk. And that's made it harder for the city to maintain city services. And let's face it, government officials at every level weren't attentive to potential problems the way they should have been. So they start getting short staffed, they start getting a shrinking tax base, more demand for services. Things start getting strained, and there's not enough help from the outside. And then, when Flint's finances collapse, an emergency manager was put in place whose mandate was primarily to cut at all costs. And then, some very poor decisions were made. All these things contributed to this crisis. Many of you know the story.

Now, I do not believe that anybody consciously wanted to hurt the people in Flint. And this is not the place to sort out every screw-up that resulted in contaminated water. But I do think there is a larger issue that we have to acknowledge, because I do think that part of what contributed to this crisis was a broader mindset, a bigger attitude, a corrosive attitude that exists in our politics and exists in our—too many levels of our government.

And it's a mindset that believes that less government is the highest good, no matter what. It's a mindset that says environmental rules designed to keep your water clean or your air clean are optional or not that important or

unnecessarily burden businesses or taxpayers. It's an ideology that undervalues the common good, says we're all on our own, and what's in it for me, and how do I do well, but I'm not going to invest in what we need as a community. And as a consequence, you end up seeing an underinvestment in the things that we all share that make us safe, that make us whole, that give us the ability to pursue our own individual dreams. So we underinvest in pipes underground. We underinvest in bridges that we drive on and the roads that connect us and the schools that move us forward.

And this is part of the attitude; this is part of the mindset: We especially underinvest when the communities that are put at risk are poor or don't have a lot of political clout and so are not as often heard in the corridors of power.

And this kind of thinking, this myth that government is always the enemy, that forgets that our government is us—it's us, that it's an extension of us, ourselves—that attitude is as corrosive to our democracy as the stuff that resulted in lead in your water. Because what happens is, it leads to systematic neglect. It leads to carelessness and callousness. It leads to a lot of hidden disasters that you don't always read about and aren't as flashy, but that over time, diminish the life of a community and make it harder for our young people to succeed.

In one of the roundtables, I was listening to somebody—I think it was a pastor—who told me, you know, it made us feel like we didn't count. And you can't have a democracy where people feel like they don't count, where people feel like they're not heard.

And that attitude ignores how this country was built, our entire history, which is based on the idea that we're all connected and that what happens in a community like Flint matters everybody and that there are things that we can only do together, as a nation, as a people, as a State, as a city, that no man is an island.

We've been debating this since the Republic began: What are our individual responsibilities and what are our collective responsibilities. And that's a good debate. But I've always believed what the first Republican President, a guy named Abraham Lincoln, said. He said we should do individually those things that we do best by ourselves. But through our government, we should do together what we can't do as well for ourselves.

So it doesn't matter how hard you work, how responsible you are, or how well you raise your kids, you can't set up a whole water system for a city. That's not something you do by yourself. You do it with other people. You can't hire your own fire department or your own police force or your own army. There are things we have to do together, basic things that we all benefit from.

And that's how we invested in a rail system and a highway system. That's how we invested in public schools. That's how we invested in science and research. These how we invested in community colleges and land grant colleges like Michigan State.

Can I get some water? Come on up here. [*Applause*] Give me some water. I want a glass of water. I want a glass of water. Sit down. I'm all right. I'm going to get a glass of water right here. Let's make sure we find one. It will be filtered. Hold on, I'm going to talk about that in a second. Settle down, everybody.

Where was I? We invested in our communities and our cities. And by making those investments in the common good, we invested in ourselves. That's the platform we create that allows each of us independently to succeed. That's what made America great.

So the people in Flint and across Michigan and around the country—individuals and church groups and non-for-profits and community organizations—you've proven that the American people will step up when required. And our volunteers, our non-for-profits, they're the lifeblood of our communities. We so appreciate what you do.

But volunteers don't build county water systems and keep lead from leaching into our drinking glasses. We can't rely on faith groups to reinforce bridges and repave runways at the airport. We can't ask second-graders, even ones as patriotic as Isiah Britt who raised all that money, to raise enough money to keep our kids healthy.

You hear a lot about government overreach, how Obama, he's for big government. Listen, it's not government overreach to say that our government is responsible for making sure you can wash your hands in your own sink or shower in your own home or cook for your family. These are the most basic services. There is no more basic element sustaining human life than water. It's not too much to expect for all Americans that their water is going to be safe.

Now, where do we go from here?

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Well, I'm still waiting for my water. [*Laughter*] Somebody obviously didn't hear me. Usually, I get my water pretty quick. Hold on a second. Now, the reason I know I'm okay is because I already had some Flint water. Here we go. I really did need a glass of water. This is not a stunt.

Now, I'm going to talk about this. Everybody settle down. This is a feisty crowd. Hold on a second. All right, everybody settle down. I've got some serious points to make here.

So where do we go from here? Now, Mayor Weaver has a plan to fix the pipes in Flint. And unfortunately, because the State initially cut so many corners, it's going to end up being more expensive—much more expensive—now than it would have been to avert the disaster in the first place. But the good news is that Michigan does have funds it can use from the Federal Government to help Flint. The Governor indicated that in his budget he has put forward additional funds to replace the pipes. In order for it to happen—and I said this to the mayor and the Governor; I had them both in my car, the Beast—I told them I wasn't going to let either of them out until we figured this out. [*Laughter*] Had Secret Service surrounding everybody.

But what I said was, is that the city and the State and the Federal Government, everybody is going to have to work together to get this done. So it's not going to happen overnight. But we have to get started. We have to get the money flowing. We've got to work with our plumbers and pipefitters, but also train local residents and start getting apprenticeship programs going, so that even as we're trying to deal with this disaster, we're also, hopefully, lifting people up and giving them an opportunity for employment. Congress, led by your congressional delegation, needs to act in a bipartisan fashion, do their job, make sure Flint has the necessary resources.

And so it's long past time that Flint has a well-managed, monitored, modern water system that protects not just against lead, but other contaminants. All right? So that's our goal. That's one goal.

But we've got to do more than just ensure the integrity and safety of your water for the long term. What we also have to do is work as one team—Federal, State, and local leaders, Democrats and Republicans—to address some of the broader issues that have been raised by this crisis. The Federal officials I met with today are committed to staying on the job until we get it done. But that requires the State of Michigan to step up and be fully invested in this process as well. Today's vote in Lansing to increase funding for health care was a good start.

But part of keeping the faith with the people of Flint means making sure that you're first in line for the jobs this effort will create. It means that since the State voted this afternoon to expand Medicaid, every child who lived in Flint while the water was bad needs to be able to get seen by a doctor, diagnosed, make sure that there's follow-up. We can't just promise it, we've got to deliver it. And that means everybody has got to cooperate. Everybody has got to cooperate.

And keeping the faith with you also means the State has to step up and deliver the resources that will help not only fix the water, but transform Flint so that it is once again a functioning city with the capacity and the democratic structures to work. The city government has to be on a firm foundation. The mayor can't do it by herself. She's got to have a team and a staff, and there's got to be a budget that works, that's sustainable, and a plan for long-term economic development and a plan to make sure that health care is available to all of our kids and a plan to make sure that education is top notch in this city and that more jobs

are being created. And that will require many more of the good works that we've seen from citizens and community groups who care about your families.

But it's not enough just to fix the water. We've got to fix the culture of neglect, the mindset I was talking about, that has degraded too many schools and too many roads and hurt too many futures. We've got to fix the mindset that only leaves people cynical about our government. Our government is us—of us, by us, for us—the people.

So we've got a lot of work to do. But I'm here to tell you I'm prepared to work with you on this. I'm paying attention.

Now, a couple of specific things I want to address. These aren't in my prepared remarks, but this is what I gathered from the conversations that I had.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]—Detroit—[*inaudible*].

The President. I'm in Flint right now, not Detroit. But I understand. [*Applause*] But I do love Detroit. And their school needs support, and there is—some of that same mindset has hurt the schools there.

But listen up, because this is drawn from the conversations I had with many of your neighbors and friends, as well as the Federal response teams that I sent out here a while back. We're going to do everything we can to accelerate getting new pipes here in Flint. But even with all the money, even with an efficient, speeded-up process, it's going to take a while for all the pipes to be replaced. It's not going to happen next month. It's not going to happen 6 months from now, where all the pipes in Flint are going to be replaced. We've got to get started, and you need to see that it's getting started and that the progress is being made. But it's not going to happen overnight. Even if we get all the plumbers and pipefitters and we get some more apprentices trained—and even if we do all that—it's going to take some time.

And so one of the things I heard talking to a lot of your neighbors is, boy, right now it's rough just trying to figure out how to get bottled water on the way home from work, and you're trying to just shower real quick, and people are still concerned about whether—what's safe and what information is correct and what is not. So I do want to just tell you what I know, based on not just what I've been reading in the papers, but what our top scientists have told me.

The first is that while you are waiting to get your pipes replaced, you need to have a filter installed and use that filter. And if you do use that filter, then the water is safe to consume for children over the age of 6 and who are not pregnant.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Now, hold on a second. Don't just start shouting, okay? Because this is the problem—we're going to have to solve this problem. And if people don't listen to each other, then it's not going to get fixed.

Now, I—so I'm telling you—and I promise you, I'm really good at stirring folks up. So if I want to just come here and stir folks up, I know how to do that. But that's not actually going to solve the problem, all right? So I'm telling what I know, because I guarantee you that the scientists who work for me, if they tell me something—which I'm saying in front of all those cameras—turns out to be wrong, that person will not have a job.

So although I understand the fear and concern that people have, and it is entirely legitimate, what the science tells us at this stage is, you should not drink any of the water that is not filtered. But if you get the filter and use it properly, that water can be consumed. That's point number one.

And you can get those filters free, and people will help install them if you need help, particularly seniors who may have trouble going back and forth and trying to get a whole bunch of bottles of water and so forth. So that's information that I trust and I believe. That's point number one.

Point number two: Every child in Flint who may have consumed water during the course of this tragedy—and that is the overwhelming majority of children here—should get checked.

Now, the reason that's important is because lead is a serious issue. And if undiagnosed and not dealt with, it can lead to some long-term

problems. But—and this is really important, so I want everybody to pay attention—if you know that your child may have been exposed and you go to a health clinic, a doctor, a provider, and are working with them, then your child will be fine. And the reason I can say that with some confidence is not just based on science, but based on the fact that keep in mind that it wasn't until the eighties where we started banning lead in paint, lead in toys, lead in gasoline. So if you are my age or older or maybe even a little bit younger, you got some lead in your system when you were growing up. You did. I am sure that somewhere, when I was 2 years old, I was taking a chip of paint, tasting it, and I got some lead. Or sometimes, toys were painted with lead, and you were chewing on them.

Now, I say that not to make light of the situation. We know now what we didn't know then, which is, it can cause problems if children get exposed to lead at elevated levels. But the point is that as long as kids are getting good health care and folks are paying attention and they're getting a good education and they have community support and they're getting some good home training and they are in a community that is loving and nurturing and thriving, these kids will be fine. And I don't want anybody to start thinking that somehow these are—all the kids in Flint are going to have problems for the rest of their lives, because that's not true. That is not true. And I don't want that stigma to be established in the minds of kids.

I mean, we've learned a lot of things since I was a kid. I used to have adults blowing smoke in my face all the time. [*Laughter*] We didn't use seat belts. We wrapped dry-cleaning bags around us and thought that was funny. [*Laughter*] Folks didn't know. No, no, but the reason I think this is important is because I heard from a lot of folks who were saying how moms and dads were feeling guilty. They were feeling sad. They were feeling depressed. Oh, Lord, what's—how is this going to affect my child. And it's right to be angry. But you can't get passive. You can't just suddenly sit back and sink into despair. Our kids will be fine, but you have to now take action. Don't wait for somebody else to reach out and ask whether your child has gotten a checkup recently. We just expanded Medicaid. Go take your child to that doctor. Use that health system.

And so community organizations, churches, et cetera, one of the things that we need to do is—and I've talked to the Governor and the mayor about this—is set up a system of outreach so that we're getting everybody as a village looking out for every child, making sure that they're getting checked up, making sure they've got pediatric care, making sure they're being tested effectively, making sure then that they're getting nutritious food.

Just to give you an example, we know that if kids are getting vegetables and eating properly, that just by itself is going to have some impact on any effects of lead. But I know that here in Flint, there are whole neighborhoods that don't even have a supermarket. So we're going to have to figure out how to get supermarkets in those communities. And in the meantime, we've got to help make sure that those kids are getting the nutrition they need.

So I say all this just to indicate, you should be angry, but channel that anger. You should be hurt, but don't sink into despair. And most of all, do not somehow communicate to our children here in this city that they're going to be saddled with problems with the rest of their lives. Because they will not. They'll do just fine, just like I did fine with a single mom and a lot of you did fine growing up in a tough neighborhood. They'll make it as long as we're there for them and looking after them and doing the right thing for them and giving them the resources that they need. Don't lose hope. [*Applause*] Don't lose hope.

I talked longer than I was going to. [*Laughter*] But I feel strongly about this whole issue with kids now. Kids rise to the expectations we set for them. A lot of kids in Flint already got some crosses they've got to bear. They've already got people telling them, oh, it's too tough for you because you're Black or you're poor or—they will do fine as long as we do right by them. And that's my intention. And set high expectations for them.

Just a couple more points. What happened here is just an extreme example, an extreme and tragic case of what's happening in a lot of places around the country. We've seen unacceptably high levels of lead in townships along the Jersey Shore and in North Carolina's major cities. We've seen it in the capitals of South Carolina and Mississippi. And even where not long ago, lead-contaminated drinking water was found: right down the street from the United States Capitol.

So Flint is just a tip of the iceberg in terms of us reinvesting in our communities. We've seen bridges fall and levies break. So we've got to break that mindset. These things aren't a coincidence. They're the same mindset that left Flint's water unsafe to drink. And it's self-destructive when we don't invest in our communities. Because a lot of times, the people who are against government spending, they'll say, well, the private sector is the key. The private sector is the key for our economy. Free markets and free enterprise are great. But companies won't invest in a place where your infrastructure is crumbling and your roads are broke. You're not going to start a business or be able to recruit outstanding staff if there's no safe drinking water in the city.

So my hope is, is that this begins a national conversation about what we need to do in—to invest in future generations. And it's no secret that, on this pipeline of neglect, a lot of times, it's the most poor folks who are left behind. It's working people who are left behind. We see it in communities across the Midwest that haven't recovered since the plants shut down. We see it on inner-city corners where they might be able to drink the water, but they can't find a job. We see it in the rural hills of Appalachia.

We've got to break that mindset that says that that neighborhood over there, that's not my problem; those kids over there, they don't look like my kids exactly, so I don't have to worry about them, out of sight, out of mind. We've got to break that attitude that says somehow there's an "us" and "them" and remind ourselves that there's just one big "we," the American family, and everybody has got to look out for each other. Because the kids here in Flint aren't "those" kids, they're "our" kids. That's what Scripture teaches us. But I'm not going to start preaching in front of some pastors.

So let me just close by saying this. Look, I know this has been a scary time. I know this is disappointing. You've been let down. But there is a sermon about a phoenix rising from these ashes. And there is the opportunity out of this complete screw-up, this painful tragedy, this neglect, this disappointment to actually pull together and make for a better future.

Sometimes, it takes a crisis for everybody to focus their attention. Because there have been a lot of crises going on in Flint; they just weren't as loud and noisy, and nobody noticed. There are a lot of small, quiet crises going on in the lives of people around this country. And this helps lift it up.

And when we see it and we understand it and we feel it, then maybe we start making a connection with each other. And that begins to change our mindset and improve our politics and improve our government to make it more responsive and more accountable. And the good news is, is that that's the natural mindset of our young people. That's why I'm so hopeful about the people of Flint. That's why I'm so hopeful about America generally, is I meet young people all the time, and they've got a mindset just like Little Miss Flint here. She decides, I'm just going right to the President, because I think we can fix this. Or the mindset of Isiah raising $15,000 to help an elementary school where he's never been.

That's America. That's who we are at our best. We are a nation of individuals, and we should be proud of everything that we can accomplish on our own through hard work and grit and looking after our own families and making sure we're raising our children right. But we don't do these things alone. Ultimately, our success is dependent on each other. Our success is dependent on each other.

I have had the privilege of being the President of the United States, a big office, an office that gives me enormous power and enormous responsibility. But the thing I've learned in that job is that I can't do it by myself. I can't fix

every problem on my own. I need a mother-in-law who helps Michelle and me raise Malia and Sasha. I need incredible staff who are carrying out our policies to sign people up for health care. I've got to have our incredible men and women in uniform who are willing to go overseas and fight on behalf of our freedom. I've got to have Governors and mayors who are willing to work with me to get things done in their States and in their cities.

And most of all, I need fellow citizens who share the values that built this great country and are willing to work with me and work together to make it better. I've said this before: The most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. It's more important than the President, more important than any Senator or Governor or mayor. It is the idea that each of us has something to contribute, each of us has something to give back.

So, Flint, I'm here not just to say I've got your back. I'm here not just to say that you will get help. I'm also here to say you've got power. I'm also here to say you count. I'm also here to say that you can make a difference and rebuild this city better than ever. And you'll have a friend and partner in the President of the United States.

God bless you. God bless Flint. God bless Michigan. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:10 p.m. in the gymnasium at Northwestern High School. In his remarks, he referred to Bilal Tawwab, superintendent, Flint Community Schools; Timothy Green, principal, Northwestern High School; Isiah Britt, student, Buckland Mills Elementary School in Gainesville, VA; former Emergency Manager Darnell Earley of Flint, MI; and Rigel J. Dawson, minister, North Central Church of Christ in Flint, MI. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson.

Statement on Holocaust Remembrance Day
May 4, 2016

Today, on Yom HaShoah, we solemnly remember the 6 million Jews and the millions of others murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

On this day, we honor the memory of the millions of individuals—the mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, friends and neighbors—who lost their lives during a time of unparalleled depravity and inhumanity. We reaffirm our ongoing responsibility as citizens and as a nation to live out the admonition: "Never forget. Never again." And we commit ourselves to preserving the memories of those who lived through the horrors of the Shoah, so that their experiences are not forgotten by our generation or by our children or grandchildren.

We also honor those who survived the Holocaust, many of them spared from death because of the righteous individuals who risked their lives to save Jews and other victims from Nazi persecution. The stories of these survivors and their protectors remind us to confront persecution wherever it arises, and that silence can be an accomplice to evil. They remind us of our duty to counter the rising tide of anti-Semitism, bigotry, and hatred that threaten the values we hold dear: pluralism, diversity, and the freedoms of religion and expression.

Today, and every day, we stand in solidarity with the Jewish community both at home and abroad. We stand with those who are leaving the European cities where they have lived for generations because they no longer feel safe, with the members of institutions that have been attacked because of their Jewish affiliations, and with the college students forced to confront swastikas appearing on their campuses. And we call upon all people of good will to be vigilant and vocal against every form of bigotry.

When we recognize our interconnectedness and the fundamental dignity and equality of every human being, we help to build a world that is more accepting, secure, and free. This is the best way to honor the legacy we recognize on Yom HaShoah and to fulfill our responsibilities to repair our world from generation to generation.

Remarks at the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies Awards Gala Dinner
May 4, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Well, it's good to see all of you. You all look so nice. Can everybody please give a big round of applause to Judy Chu for her outstanding service. A couple other people I want to acknowledge. I want to thank Floyd Mori, Norm Mineta, all the outstanding Members of Congress who are joining us. So, how's it?

Audience member. Cruising, brother.

The President. Cruising, yes. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Cruising.

The President. Right on. [*Laughter*] Being with the Asian American Pacific Islander community is like being with family.

Audience member. I love you, Obama!

The President. I love you back.

Audience member. We love you! Obama 2016!

The President. All right, settle down, you guys. [*Laughter*]

I—as many of you know, I grew up in Hawaii. I spent time in Indonesia as a young boy. The food, the culture, the spirit of the Asia-Pacific region—that's who I am. And that's why it gives me so much pleasure to see all of you and to thank all of you for everything you're doing to make sure that the AAPI community is participating in the political process. And together, as Judy noted, we've accomplished a lot of things.

And one thing that's clear—and you can see it in this room—is the amazing diversity of the AAPI community. From Southeast Asia to the Indian subcontinent, from the Pacific Islands to the Native Hawaiians of my home State, you represent the heritage that spans the globe. And your families may come from different countries. They may speak different languages, practice different faiths. Some of you live on the land of your ancestors. And for others, the journey began when somebody in your family—or maybe you—decided to leave behind what you knew to seek a better life in a new world.

Audience member. In America!

The President. No matter what your background, no matter what your story, whether you're first-generation or fifth-generation American, you're bound by something more powerful than your differences, and that is this unshakeable faith in America, that notion that here, in this country, we can make of our lives what we will. And the AAPI community, you're part of the lifeblood of this Nation. You are our teachers and our faith leaders, our doctors, our caretakers, our artists, our shopkeepers, our police officers and firefighters.

Audience member. We are citizens.

The President. You—this is true. [*Laughter*]

You are our soldiers and our sailors, airmen, marines, coast guardsmen, defending our freedom every day. And increasingly, you are a powerful, visible force in American political life.

Now, given that success, sometimes, it's easy for people to buy into the myth of "model minority" and gloss over the real challenges and discrimination that still exist. We know that certain AAPI groups still face higher dropout rates, obstacles to employment, even higher rates of some diseases. So this is part of the reason why under my administration we're trying to improve the Federal Government's data collection so we get a better picture of which communities might still need additional resources and attention to overcome some of these barriers.

We reestablished the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to take a closer look at specific issues facing different AAPI communities. And I want to thank Doua Thor for her amazing leadership. Those efforts have made a difference. And I'll give you a good example. After the BP spill in the Gulf, all recovery information was translated into multiple languages so that we could address the concerns of Vietnamese and Khmer fishermen getting back on their feet after the disaster.

When we passed the Affordable Care Act, 20 million uninsured adults have coverage. Among Asian Americans who aren't yet old enough to qualify for Medicare, the uninsured rate has dropped by more than 60 percent because of what we did, because of Obamacare. And we're going to keep working to make sure everybody gets the coverage they need.

We've worked hard to make sure that the AAPI community is represented at every level of the Federal Government. That's why I've made appointments of AAPI judges to the Federal bench. As Judy noted, we've made more AAPI judicial appointments than every other President combined, because we believe that the judiciary has to look like America.

We set up a Task Force on New Americans to help immigrants and refugees better integrate into our American communities. And what's been exciting is how many local communities are taking it upon themselves to welcome our newest Americans into the fold and introduce them to both the rights and responsibilities, as well as benefits, of citizenship. Just this week, we finalized a policy to help reunite Filipino World War II vets with their family members who are stuck in our immigration backlog.

Most Americans understand a fundamental truth about our country: that while almost every nation in the world, to some extent, admits immigrants, there's something unique about America. We don't simply welcome new immigrants, we are born of immigrants. It is our oldest tradition, part of what makes us not only exceptional, but what makes us secure and prosperous and free. Which is why it's so difficult to understand why some folks are still standing in the way of comprehensive immigration reform. We need congressional action. But because we couldn't wait any longer, I took action, within my legal authority, to make our immigration system more fair and more just. And these actions have made this country stronger by welcoming people like Regina Ledesma. Where's Regina? There she is.

So I want to tell Regina's story, because it's an example of what's at stake here. Regina came to the United States from the Philippines when she was 5 years old. But when her father, who was an engineer, fell ill, he had to give up his job, which meant he could no longer secure documentation for his family. So Regina's mom supported the family by working at a hair salon. Regina grew up as American as anybody else. She didn't even know until she was in middle school that she was undocumented. And she didn't understand until then that she'd be perpetually in danger of being deported from the only country she had ever called home. As a junior in high school, Regina requested relief under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals—or DACA—policy that we put in place. And today, she's a sophomore studying economics at the University of Maryland. Her future is bright, and America is better off because she is here. That's the story of immigrants in this country.

So we're proud of what we've been able to achieve. But in addition to all of you looking very nice, part of the reason we're here is because we understand we can't be complacent. The actions I've taken on my own can't take the place of what we really need, which is Congress to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill. It's the right thing to do, smart thing to do. And you have the power to push Congress to do it. And you can't give up that power.

The AAPI community is the fastest growing minority in America, but it's still—[*applause*]—well, that's good to cheer about, but it's still significantly underrepresented at the ballot box. In 2012, just 56 percent of eligible AAPI voters were registered to vote. And fewer than half of those registered actually voted. So if you're upset with America's immigration policy, but you're not voting, that has to change.

Audience member. I'll vote for you!

The President. Not for me. [*Laughter*] We've got some outstanding candidates. If you are upset with Congress, but you're not showing up to vote in midterm elections—not just Presidential elections—that has to change. And if you doubt what's at stake, I think you obviously haven't been reading the papers. [*Laughter*]

We've got to push back against anti-immigrant sentiment in all of its forms, especially by

those who are trying to stoke it just to seek political gain and just to try to get headlines. And just as we moved beyond "No Irish Need Apply" signs, just as we moved beyond questioning the loyalty of Catholics, just as we moved beyond the active persecution of Chinese immigrants, just as we learned the stain on our history from our treatment of Japanese immigrants and even Japanese Americans in World War II, we are going to move beyond today's anti-immigrant sentiment as well. We will live up to our ideals. We just have to keep speaking out against hatred and bigotry in all of its forms.

So I'm proud of all of you for rallying around the Muslim and Sikh and Arab and South Asian communities who face a rising tide of bigotry and harassment. To support your work, we recently launched the AAPI Bullying Prevention Task Force to look at ways that the Federal Government can help your communities prevent and respond to bullying. The Justice Department successfully recommended the addition of "Anti-Sikh," "Anti-Hindu," and "Anti-Arab/Anti-Middle Eastern" categories to the FBI's hate crime reporting form. That's going to strengthen our efforts to end these despicable crimes. And we will continue to stand in solidarity with all of our LGBT brothers and sisters against hateful rhetoric and discriminatory State laws targeting them.

Because these things are connected. Americans are different. We look different. We sound different. We come from different regions. We have different interests, different politics, different economic situations. But in the eyes of the law, we're supposed to be treated equally. And if one person is being oppressed, if one group feels that justice is being denied, that's an affront to all of us, to the values on which this Nation was founded.

And that's why it's so important that the AAPI community has spoken out in favor of criminal justice reform and sentencing reform. That's a powerful manifestation of this creed that is as old as our founding: "e pluribus unum"—out of many, one. That's when this country works. We can be proud of our individual heritage, and we can be fighting every single day for the democratic values and pluralism that allows us to all live together. We can work through the democratic process rather than turn to violence or sectarianism to resolve disputes, as sadly happens in so many places around the world. We can strive to see ourselves in each other. We were all strangers once, until America welcomed us home.

And in the end, this is the work of self-government. It is hard, it is slow. It can be frustrating. Sometimes, it's scary to speak out against wrongs and to help our fellow citizens when they need a hand. That's not always convenient. But ultimately, our job is not just to fight for our own rights, it's to fight for the rights of all people, everywhere. That's our job: to exercise our most precious inheritance, citizenship. And that means we have to be well-informed, we have to engage with our Government, and we have to vote—not when—not just when it's time to elect a President, every single election. School boards matter. County offices matter. State attorneys races matter. State legislative races matter.

That's how we honor the trailblazers who sacrificed so that we could be here today and how we fulfill our promise as a nation. That's how we're going to ensure that the freedoms secured by those who came before us will always be the birthright of our children. That's your goal. That's my goal. Now, let's make sure we get to work. Thanks, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:18 p.m. at the Washington Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Judy Chu, in her capacity as chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, who introduced the President; Floyd Mori, president and chief executive officer, Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies; former Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta; and Doua Thor, Executive Director, White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Remarks at a Cinco de Mayo Celebration
May 5, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. No, no, I can't. No, no, no.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. All right, let me say, in addition to the Constitution, Michelle will not allow that. [*Laughter*] *Buenas tardes.*

Audience members. Buenas tardes!

The President. Feliz Cinco de Mayo! Bienvenidos a la Casa Blanca.

This is one of our best fiestas of the year. And I want to thank Yanely for not only the introduction, but for being just—what an unbelievable example of the young people who are going to be leading us in the future. She wasn't even nervous backstage. She knew she was going to do great. So we're so proud of her.

We have a couple of guests I want to just make sure to mention. Representative Joaquin Castro is in the house, from the great State of Texas. I know your parents are proud of you, and we're proud of you.

I want to thank our special guest chef, Johnny Hernandez, who brought his taco and margarita recipes all the way from San Antón. And give it up for our outstanding performers, Maná. I was thinking about coming out and playing. But I decided maybe not. [*Laughter*] Let me not spoil the party.

We all know the story of Cinco de Mayo. A hundred fifty-four years ago, the French, one of the strongest armies of the 19th century, marched on the tiny town of Puebla. An ill-equipped and hastily trained band of Mexican patriots grabbed whatever weapons they could find, and they fought off the opposing forces and eventually regained full independence.

A hundred fifty years later, Americans and Mexicans still celebrate Cinco de Mayo. In backyard barbeques and baseball parks, from Chicago to Austin, folks are enjoying music and food and good times with family and friends, just like we're doing here today. Earlier, I had a chance to speak with President Peña Nieto of Mexico about our shared work on advancing the prosperity and the security of Americans and Mexicans. And so I wished him a happy Cinco de Mayo. And he asked me to extend the same to you, so I'm doing my duty here. It's a reminder of not just a holiday, but the incredible bonds that our two countries share.

Audience member. Hey!

The President. Hey! [*Laughter*]

And on my final Cinco de Mayo at the White House, in the company of this extraordinary group, I want to remind everybody of everything we've gotten done. We've been busy. And we couldn't have done it without you.

Together, we increased high school and college graduation rates, cutting the Latino dropout rate by more than half since 2000. Together, we ensured that more than 700,000 DREAMers have the opportunity to reach their potential.

Together, we continue to fight to fix our broken immigration system. The fact that we weren't able to get it through Congress has been one of the most frustrating aspects of my Presidency. But our ability to take actions within my legal authority to make our immigration system fairer and smarter and more just, I continue to believe, are going to help pave the way for us to finally get the law passed through the next Congress.

And I've got to tell you, I'm going to keep on working on this not just as President, but as a citizen, once I'm leaving here, because I think it's one of the most important things we can get done. Now, in order to do that, everybody has got to follow this young lady's lead and get out there and vote. So we'll have another occasion to talk about that. But we're going to have to have some historic turnout rates come November.

Today is really, then, not just a celebration of all that we've gotten done, but it's a commitment to continue our work. Change is hard. Sometimes, it takes time. Sometimes, you take two steps forward, and then you have to take

one step back. But it's always possible to bring about the change we hope for as long as good people are willing to work together and remain committed, willing to march and organize and vote and educate our friends and our families and our neighbors, and tell the stories of all the incredible people who have contributed to this great Nation of ours who are immigrants, who came from some other places, but ended up weaving their stories together with people from all around the globe to make this unique country we call America.

Change is possible because of people like you. It's because of people like Efrain Escobedo. I want to tell his story, because Efrain was born in Los Angeles to two immigrants from Mexico. As an oldest child, Efrain took on the role as his parents' advocate, translating for them in school and at the doctor's office. And when he turned 18, eager to exercise his new right to vote, he realized that his parents couldn't vote. He said, I had these two parents who raised me to love this country and worked so hard to be there, and yet, in a very important way, they weren't a part of this democracy.

The more Efrain learned about the power of his vote, the more he threw himself into the work of turning whole neighborhoods of people like him into active and engaged citizens. And through the organization where he works, the California Community Foundation, he's worked tirelessly to encourage people to apply for citizenship and become involved in their communities and to vote and to consider running for office themselves.

In 2007, with other Latino leaders, he helped lead a campaign to encourage people to become U.S. citizens, and he joined the citizenship campaign I launched last September. And since Efrain's campaign was launched, millions of people have become U.S. citizens and active participants in our democracy. And that just shows you the difference that one person can make. If we use our democracy, he says, it does work, and every vote really does count.

Throughout this room, all across this land, we're blessed with people like Efrain. And that's what makes strong communities. That's what makes for a strong country. People working to push this country forward, even just a little bit, and then handing it off in better shape for future generations. And that's really what we celebrate here today.

And for that, I want to thank you. For that, I think you've all earned a few margaritas. [*Laughter*]

So thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America. *Viva Mexico.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:12 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Denver, CO, resident Yanely Gonzalez; Maria del Rosario Castro and Jesse Guzman, parents of Rep. Joaquin Castro; and Efrain Escobedo, vice president of civic engagement and public policy, California Community Foundation, and his parents Efrain Escobedo, Sr., and Rosa M. Escobedo.

Statement on the Death of Former Senator Robert F. Bennett
May 5, 2016

Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of former Senator Bob Bennett. For 18 years, Bob worked tirelessly in the United States Senate for his fellow Utahns. His commitment to his constituents transcended partisanship, and he often reached across the aisle to get things done. He was a dedicated public servant, and his work—like efforts to save the country from economic collapse—is exemplary of what we can accomplish when we put aside our differences and focus on our common goals. Michelle and I offer our deepest condolences to Bob's wife Joyce and their children and grandchildren.

Remarks on the Fifth Anniversary of the Joining Forces Initiative at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland

May 5, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Give it up for Joe Biden! Oh, it is good to see all of you here today. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat.

I want to recognize all of our outstanding military leaders who are here. And I want to acknowledge our Secretary of the Air Force, Deborah Lee James; Chief Master Sergeant Mitchell Brush from the National Guard; Major General Darryl Burke; Wing Commander Bradley Hoagland. And I want to thank the USO for the outstanding work that they have done for so many years and it means so much to not only those who serve in uniform, but also their families. So please give it up for the USO. We are very proud of them.

And let's hear it for the funny people who are here tonight who are going to be—I think—telling a few jokes, I hope, including our host, the Bob Hope of this USO show, Jon Stewart. The one and only. I do want to mention, though, any jokes told about me, you should not laugh. [*Laughter*] I'm just kidding. This is actually my second comedy show in the past week. [*Laughter*] The good news is, there are no tuxedos. [*Laughter*] And most importantly, I get to spend some time with you, the men and women who make up the greatest fighting force the world's ever seen.

I know we already did the roll call, but I just want to see if you guys can do it a little bit better this time. [*Laughter*] And by the way, I'm going to start with Army, because Jon made fun of you. Army! [*Applause*] There you go. We've got Navy here. [*Applause*] Air Force is in the house! [*Applause*] This is an Air Force base. [*Laughter*] I mean, I'm just saying. You've got a little home field advantage. [*Laughter*] Marines! [*Applause*] And Coast Guard. [*Applause*] All right. Good job, Coast Guard. [*Laughter*] Military spouses and kids, let's hear you! [*Applause*]

It is—this is a nice way for me to not just say thank you for your service, but to give a particular thanks to Joint Base Andrews, home of the 89th Airlift Wing. Because Joe and I spend a little bit of time on this base. [*Laughter*] You guys are the ones who take care of our planes. You keep us on time, most of the time. [*Laughter*] And you're always the first ones to welcome us home. So you mean so much to us. And I'm so glad we're able to do something here so that you guys know we don't take you for granted. And Michelle and I, Joe and Jill, when we come in and out of this base, we know how many people stand behind the planes and the helicopters and all the incredible work that's being done just moving us around every single day. So thank you very much. We really mean it. Thank you.

Thanks for your service here. Thanks for your service around the world. Now, because I'm standing between you and a party, I am going to be the Commander in Brief. [*Laughter*]

One of my greatest honors is to serve you and your families. And that means using our military power wisely. It means sending you into harm's way when it's absolutely necessary. It means making sure that you—our troops, our veterans, your families—are getting the care and the benefits that you've earned. It means cutting the disability claims backlog. It means helping you and your families, whether it's starting a business or pursuing your education under the post-9/11 GI bill.

And the good news is, we've made a lot of progress over these past 8 years. But the work of doing right by you and your families is never done. And it is not just a job for Government. And that's why we're here today.

Back on the campaign in 2008, Michelle sat down with some military spouses, and she was deeply moved by the stories of your service, and your strength, and your resilience. She heard stories of families enduring multiple deployments. This was obviously at a time when we still had 180,000 troops deployed between Iraq and Afghanistan. Spouses and veterans were coming home and struggling to find jobs. Children constantly moving from school to

school. And these are stories you live out every day, but they're ones that the rest of the country wasn't always hearing. So Michelle pledged that if she became First Lady, she'd help share those stories far and wide and challenge Americans to stand with you.

And 5 years ago, she teamed up with another formidable force, Jill Biden, to start Joining Forces. As a Blue Star Mom, as a teacher whose dad served in World War II, Jill was already fired up about reaching out to military kids. And together, they wanted to channel what they knew was America's good will towards our military into something concrete and something real. Not just a parade on Veterans Day or Memorial Day, not just honors at a ballgame, but what was happening day to day to make people's lives better. And so Michelle and Jill wanted to help folks answer a question that a lot of people were asking, which is, how can we do more? How can we help more?

So they started by focusing on the most basic ingredient of stability and security: a job. In the aftermath of the economic crisis, the unemployment rate overall had reached 10 percent. But for some of our veterans it was even worse. As many as one in four of our youngest vets were looking for jobs. And too many of our military spouses were struggling to find work because their families were constantly relocated.

So Michelle and Jill reached out to hundreds of America's biggest brands and employers—companies like Walmart and Disney and Amazon—telling them the same thing I tell CEOs every time, which is, if you want a job done right, hire a vet, hire a military spouse. They know how to handle stress. They know how to do the job. They know how to perform under pressure. They have proven themselves.

And the good news is, over the past 5 years, America's businesses have begun to answer the call. All told, the unemployment rate for veterans has been cut in half, and through Joining Forces, companies have hired or trained more than 1.2 million veterans and military spouses.

But Michelle and Jill didn't stop there. They worked with States to change professional licensing laws so that our vets can get credit for your military training and spouses can get hired when you move across State lines. They're working to rally almost 900 mayors and local leaders to get our homeless veterans into housing and to get the support that they need. They help teachers and schools support military students from kindergarten through college. They supported our caregivers and our wounded warriors. And they've worked to destigmatize mental health challenges.

They've worked with Hollywood to share your stories with the American people in movies and television. And they've shined a special light on our women servicemembers and our veterans. And they've mobilized communities all across the country to honor and support our military families.

All of this just in 5 years. And here's the thing. This event is not the endpoint, it's not the finish line. This is just a marker on the race. It's a mile marker. Because every year, around 200,000 American heroes are transitioning back into civilian life. And whether it's wartime or peacetime, many of our troops still serve far from home, and families like yours sacrifice. So Michelle and Jill have pledged to keep charging forward on this issue, not just for the next 9 months, but long after we leave office.

And that's why tonight, on this fifth anniversary, I want to renew Michelle and Jill's call from the day they launched this effort. I challenge every American to keep asking that simple question: "How can I give back to these troops and families who have given me so much?" Everybody should have that in their minds. Because thanks to Joining Forces, we have answers in terms of how you can help.

If you're a business owner, hire more veterans and military spouses. And if you don't know how to do it, let us know. We'll tell you. If you're a teacher, reach out to the military students in your class. And if you need ideas for how to provide more support, Joining Forces will let you know. If you're a mayor or a coworker or a neighbor, go to joiningforces.gov to find out how you can make a difference for military families in your communities. That's how we can concretely show that we have your

backs: that it's not just lip service, but we're actually doing something concrete.

That's what today is about. I could not be prouder of everything the American people have done and will continue to do through Joining Forces. More importantly, I think I speak for Joe Biden to say I could not be prouder of two people who are as smart and charismatic and committed and dedicated. What they've been able to accomplish with almost no budget, but just through sheer force of will and personality and commitment to you is something that leaves me in awe. I am so proud of them.

Give it up for two champions for our troops and our veterans and our military families: Michelle Obama and Jill Biden.

Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden. Hi. Hello. Thank you to the Commander in Chief, President Obama, for that wonderful introduction. Thank you. And of course, I want to say thank you to my husband, Joe, the Vice President——

The President. He's all right. [*Laughter*]

Mrs. Biden. ——for always supporting and encouraging me to do as much as we can to show our military families how much we appreciate them.

[*At this point, Mrs. Biden made additional remarks, followed by remarks from the First Lady.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 6:18 p.m. in Hangar 8 of the District of Columbia Air National Guard. In his remarks, he referred to CMSgt Mitchell O. Brush, USAF, senior enlisted adviser, National Guard Bureau; Maj. Gen. Darryl W. Burke, USAF, commander, Air Force District of Washington and 320th Air Expeditionary Wing; Col. Bradley T. Hoagland, USAF, commander, 11th Wing and Joint Base Andrews; and comedian and television personality Jon Stewart. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Biden, Mrs. Biden, and the First Lady.

Remarks on the National Economy and an Exchange With Reporters
May 6, 2016

The President. All right. Good afternoon, everybody. Seven years ago, in April of 2009, our economy lost nearly 700,000 jobs, and the unemployment rate hit 9 percent on its way to 10 percent.

Seven years later, in April 2016, our economy added 160,000 new jobs. That makes April the 74th consecutive month of private sector job growth in America. Over that record streak of job growth, our businesses have created 14.6 million new jobs in all. Wages have been rising at an annual rate of more than 3 percent this year.

So the unemployment rate [economy]* has been growing, unemployment has been falling, and wages have been rising. But the global economy, as many people here are aware, is not growing as fast as it should be. You're still seeing lagging growth in places like Europe, Japan, and now China. Here in the United States, there are folks out there who are still hurting. And so we've got to do everything we can to strengthen the good trends and to guard against some dangerous trends in the global economy. And if the Republican Congress joined us to take some steps that are pretty common sense, then we could put some additional wind at the backs of working Americans.

To create new jobs, they should invest in our infrastructure: our roads, our bridges, our schools, our water mains. Some of you joined me when I went to Flint this week. It was a great example of the kind of work that is out there to be done. And we could be putting people all across this country back to work, with huge multiplier effects across the economy, if we started investing in the infrastructure that will make us more productive.

* White House correction.

To reward some of the hardest working people in America, Congress should raise the minimum wage. This is something that would not only help those individuals who are getting a bigger paycheck, but it also means they're spending more, and that would be a boost to business.

To level the playing field for American workers and crack down on unfair foreign competition, they should pass smart new trade agreements.

And Congress should reform our Tax Code to promote growth and job creation, which includes closing wasteful loopholes and simplifying the Tax Code for everybody.

Now, I've been talking about this for a while. Only Congress can fully close the loopholes that wealthy individuals and powerful corporations all too often take advantage of, often at the expense of middle class families. If they're getting out of paying their fair share of taxes, that means that the rest of us have to shoulder that burden. And I've put forward plans repeatedly to do exactly that: close loopholes, make sure that everybody is paying their fair share, which would not only give people greater confidence in the system, but would be good for our economy. It would make sure that families and small businesses, who don't have fancy lawyers and fancy accountants, are being treated the same as big corporations who do.

I think it's fair to say the Congress will not act on a big tax reform plan before the election that would shut down some of these loopholes. But what my administration has been doing is to look for steps that we can take on our own to make the tax system fairer.

In recent months, we've seen just how big a problem corruption and tax evasion have become around the globe. We saw what happened with the release of the Panama Papers, and we've seen the degree to which both legal practices of tax avoidance that are still unfair and bad for the economy, as well as illegal practices that, in some cases, involve nefarious activities continue to exist and to spread. So combating this kind of tax evasion and strengthening the global financial system have been priorities of mine since I took office. And they're part of our broader, ongoing efforts to make sure the rules aren't rigged and our economy works for everybody.

Let me give you an example. Here at home, we've made our Tax Code fairer and asked the wealthiest Americans to start paying their fair share. And last month, the Treasury Department took action to prevent more corporations from taking advantage of a tax loophole that let them shift their address abroad just to avoid paying taxes in America, taxes that they rightfully owe.

We've taken several steps to make sure that our law—our tax laws are enforced, including leading efforts to crack down on offshore evasion. And as a result, thousands of individuals have come forward to disclose offshore accounts and pay the taxes that they owe, along with interest and penalties.

Today we're building on those efforts. And I'm—I believe that you've heard from Treasury, but I wanted to amplify what they've told you in detail. Number one, we are requiring banks and other financial institutions to know, verify, and report who the real people are behind shell corporations that set up accounts at those institutions. One of the main ways that companies avoid taxes, or wealthy individuals avoid taxes, is by setting up a bunch of shell corporations and making it harder to trace where monies are flowing and what taxes are owed. We're saying to those financial institutions, you've got to step up and get that information.

Second, we're plugging a gap in our tax rules that foreigners can exploit to hide their assets to evade taxes. The Treasury Department and the IRS are issuing a proposed rule to make sure foreigners cannot hide behind anonymous shell companies formed inside the United States.

Now, these actions are going to make a difference. They will allow us to continue to do a better job of tracking financial flows and making sure that people are paying the taxes that they owe, rather than using shell corporations and offshore accounts to avoid doing the things that ordinary Americans, hard-working Ameri-

cans are doing every day, and that's making sure that they're paying their fair share.

Having said that, we're not going to be able to complete this job unless Congress acts as well. So I'm calling on Congress to pass new legislation that requires all companies formed inside the United States to report information about their real owners to the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network. That's going to help law enforcement better investigate and prevent financial crimes. I'm calling on Congress to provide the Justice Department with additional tools to investigate corruption and money launderers. And I'm calling on the Senate—in particular, Senator Rand Paul, who's been a little quirky on this issue—to stop blocking the implementation of tax treaties that have been pending for years. And these treaties actually improve law enforcement's ability to investigate and crack down on offshore tax evasion. And I'm assuming that's not something that he's in favor of.

So we're going to need to cooperate internationally because tax evasion, tax avoidance, money laundering—these things are all taking place in a global financial system, and if we can't cooperate with other countries it makes us harder for us to crack down.

If we can combine the actions that we're taking administratively with the new tools that I'm asking Congress to provide the Justice Department and Treasury, these actions will prevent tax evasion, they'll prevent money laundering, they'll prevent terrorist financing. And they'll, most importantly, uphold a fundamental principle of our economy: In America, no matter how wealthy or powerful, you should play by the same set of rules as everybody else.

All right. Thanks. I'm going to take a couple questions. With that, let's see, go ahead, Jeff [Jeff Mason, Reuters]. Since you're now the incoming president of the White House Correspondents' dinner. [*Laughter*]

2016 Presidential Election

Q. Thank you, sir. Mr. President, what's your reaction to Donald Trump becoming the presumptive nominee of the Republican Party this week? And given the delegate math, do you think it's time for Bernie Sanders to step aside on the Democratic race?

The President. Well, with respect to the Republican process and Mr. Trump, there's going to be plenty of time to talk about his positions on various issues. He has a long record that needs to be examined, and I think it's important for us to take seriously the statements he's made in the past.

But most importantly—and I speak to all of you in this room as reporters, as well as the American public—I think—I just want to emphasize the degree to which we are in serious times and this is a really serious job. This is not entertainment. This is not a reality show. This is a contest for the Presidency of the United States.

And what that means is that every candidate, every nominee needs to be subject to exacting standards and genuine scrutiny. It means that you've got to make sure that their budgets add up. It means that if they say they've got an answer to a problem, that it is actually plausible and that they have details for how it would work. And if it's completely implausible and would not work, that needs to be reported on. And the American people need to know that. If they take a position on international issues that could threaten war or has the potential of upending our critical relationships with other countries or would potentially break the financial system, that needs to be reported on.

And the one thing that I'm going to really be looking for over the next 6 months is that the American people are effectively informed about where candidates stand on the issues, what they believe, making sure that their numbers add up, making sure that their policies have been vetted and that candidates are held to what they've said in the past.

And if that happens, then I'm confident our democracy will work. And that's true whether we're talking about Mr. Trump or Ms. Clinton or Bernie Sanders or anybody else. But what I'm concerned about is the degree to which reporting and information starts emphasizing the spectacle and the circus, because that's not something we can afford. And the American people, they've got good judgment, they've got

good instincts, as long as they get good information.

All right?

Q. And on Sanders dropping out?

The President. I think on the Democratic side, let's let the process play itself out. You mentioned the delegate math. I think everybody knows what that math is. I think Senator Sanders has done an extraordinary job raising a whole range of issues that are important to Democratic voters as well as the American people, generally. And I know that at some point there's going to be a conversation between Secretary Clinton and Bernie Sanders about how we move towards the convention.

The good news is that despite the fact that during the course of primaries everybody starts getting a little chippy—I've been through this, it's natural, sometimes even more with the staffs and supporters than with the candidates themselves—the good news is, is that there's a pretty strong consensus within the Democratic Party on the vast majority of issues.

There's some disagreement about tactics. There's some disagreement about political strategy or policy nuance. But both Secretary Clinton and Bernie Sanders believe that every American should have health care. So do I. Both candidates believe that we should be raising the minimum wage. Both candidates believe that we should invest in our infrastructure and put more people back to work. Both candidates believe that we should pass a comprehensive immigration reform policy that makes sure we're enforcing laws and improving our legal immigration system and making sure our borders are secure, but also that we continue to enjoy the incredible boost that we get from attracting talent from all around the world. Both candidates agree that we should be prudent in terms of how we use our military and that we should care for our veterans when they come home.

So if you look at 95 percent of the issues, there's strong agreement there. You don't see the same kinds of divisions between the two Democratic candidates that remain that you've been seeing in some of the Republican debates.

Yes.

2016 Presidential Election

Q. Mr. President, what did Speaker Ryan's comments tell you about the state of the Republican Party? And how would you advise your fellow Democrats, who appear to have to now run against Donald Trump, as to how they can win in November?

The President. Well, I think you have to ask Speaker Ryan what the implications of his comments are. There is no doubt that there is a debate that's taking place inside the Republican Party about who they are and what they represent.

Their standard bearer at the moment is Donald Trump. And I think not just Republican officials, but more importantly, Republican voters are going to have to make a decision as to whether this is the guy who speaks for them and represents their values.

I think Republican women voters are going to have to decide, is that the guy I feel comfortable with in representing me and what I care about. I think folks who, historically, have been concerned about making sure that budgets add up and that we are responsible stewards of Government finances have to ask, does Mr. Trump's budgets work. Those are going to be questions that Republican voters, more than Republican officials, have to answer.

And as far as Democrats, I think we run on what we're for, not just on what we're against. For the last 7½ years, we've been pretty clear about what we believe will help working families who are struggling out there. And although it has been difficult to get through Republican Congresses to get those things done, the truth is, is that they continue to be prescriptions that would really help people.

Making sure that families get paid sick leave and family leave and early childhood education, that would help families. Raising the minimum wage would help a lot of people. Rebuilding infrastructure would put back to work a whole bunch of guys in hardhats and gals in hardhats that need to work. And those are good jobs that can't be exported. Now is the time to do it.

So I want Democrats to feel confident about the policy prescriptions we're putting forward, and the contrast, I think, will be pretty clear. I'll leave it up to the Republicans to figure out how they square their circle.

All right. I'm going to take two more questions. Yes, go ahead.

Republican Presidential Candidate Donald J. Trump/2016 Presidential Election

Q. Mr. President, what's your message to Democratic voters who have yet to cast their vote, who may be hesitant to vote for the Democratic frontrunner because of the ongoing e-mail scandal and investigation? And also, did you see Donald Trump's taco bowl tweet, and your thoughts on it?

The President. I have no thoughts on Mr. Trump's tweets. As a general rule, I don't pay attention to Mr. Trump's tweets. And I think that will be true, I think, for the next 6 months. So you can just file that one. [*Laughter*]

In terms of the Democratic vote coming up, I'm going to let the voters cast their ballots and not try to meddle in the few primaries that are remaining. Let the process play itself out. We'll know soon enough. It's not going to be that much longer.

David [David Nakamura, Washington Post].

Washington, DC, Metrorail System/Infrastructure/2016 Presidential Election

Q. I just wanted to ask you one on infrastructure. Not long before your nuclear summit where you had 50 world leaders here, the DC Metro was closed for over 24 hours.

The President. Right.

Q. You, at the White House Correspondents' dinner, made note that you'll soon be, sort of, a more ordinary District resident. I'm wondering what that says that the Nation's Capital, their own Metro system was closed for 24 hours and is having a number of safety-related problems. And what can your administration do, if Republicans are standing in the way of an infrastructure bill, specifically for the DC Metro, to potentially provide more funding or any more support for such a critical service?

The President. Well, first of all, I know this is a somewhat self-interested question, I assume, because a bunch of folks here take the Metro. [*Laughter*] But it is just one more example of the underinvestments that have been made.

Look, the DC Metro, historically, has been a great strength of this region, but over time, we underinvested in maintenance and repair. And the steps that are being taken now I'll refer to the Department of Transportation. And—but I can say that obviously safety comes first, and we want to make sure that if there are safety concerns that they're addressed.

The broader issue, though, is we've got bridges, we've got roads, we have ports, we have airports, we have water mains and pipes—as we saw in Flint—that suffer from neglect. And in many parts of the country, we're still relying on systems that were built 30, 50, in some cases, 100 years ago. And the reason we've been neglecting them is not because we don't know how to fix them. It's not because people haven't been aware of the need. We've known for years now that we're a trillion or 2 trillion dollars short in terms of necessary infrastructure repair.

I talked about this when I came into office and sought to do more in terms of investing in our Nation's infrastructure. The problem we have is that the Republican Congress has been resistant to really taking on this problem in a serious way. And the reason is, is because of an ideology that says government spending is necessarily bad.

And I addressed this when I was in Flint. That mindset, that ideology has led to us not investing in those things that we have to do together. As you point out, this Metropolitan area, the Nation's Capital, economically, is actually doing really well. But it doesn't matter much—how big your paycheck is if you've been taking the Metro and suddenly it's shut down for a month. And now you're stuck in traffic trying to drive to work instead.

You can't build your own Metro system. You can't build your own highway. You can't build your own airport. And so we have a specific problem with underinvesting in infrastructure. Now is the time, by the way, for us to do so.

Interest rates are so low, and there are so many contractors and construction workers that are underemployed at the moment that you can actually get jobs done on time, on schedule. It would give a boost to our overall economy, because we know that when we spend a dollar in infrastructure, then we actually get a bigger bang for the buck in terms of the economy overall.

Surrounding businesses, suppliers, food trucks—everybody does better. And it gives a huge boost to the economy, and it lasts for a long time. Think about the investments we made in things like the Hoover Dam or the Golden Gate Bridge or Metro. It's a good thing to do. And it, historically, was not, and should not be, partisan. But if we have a mindset that says whatever government is doing must be bad, then these are going to be the results.

And it's going to continue to get worse. It's already tough in poorer communities, like Flint. But we're seeing these kinds of infrastructure problems spring up in communities all across the country. And it doesn't distinguish by race or by region. Everybody needs roads. Everybody needs airports.

So, hopefully, this will prompt a conversation. The last thing I'm going to say about this: This is a good example of making sure that the candidates are speaking to this issue as you go into the Presidential election. I've put forward very specific proposals for how I would pay for additional infrastructure investment. The numbers add up. And so the question is, how do the remaining candidates for the Presidency intend to tackle this? How do Members of Congress intend to tackle this? What's the Republican agenda for infrastructure? Do they have one? How do they pay for it? Do they pay for it by cutting Medicare or Medicaid? If they do, that needs to be fleshed out. And the consequences for working families needs to be explained.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:16 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sen. Bernard Sanders, in their capacity as Democratic Presidential candidates.

The President's Weekly Address
May 7, 2016

Hello, everybody. In our house, everybody knows that President is only the third most important job in the family. So this weekend, I'm going to take a little extra time to say thank you to Michelle for the remarkable way she does the most important job: being a mom. And I'm going to give extra thanks to my mother-in-law for the role model she's always been to Michelle and the countless selfless ways in which she's helped Michelle and me raise Malia and Sasha. I am incredibly lucky to have these wonderful women to help me raise, love, and look after our girls.

I hope you'll also take a moment to say thank you to the women in your life who love you in that special way moms do. Biological moms, adoptive moms, and foster moms; single moms, grandmas, and godmothers; aunts, mentors—whomever you think of when you think of Mother's Day. Or take a moment, like I will, to remember the moms who raised us, whose big hearts sustained us, and whom we miss every day, no matter how old we get.

Giving flowers is always a good idea. But I hope that on this Mother's Day, we'll recommit ourselves to doing more than that: Through deeds that match our words, let's give mothers the respect they deserve, give all women the equality they deserve, and give all parents the support that they need in their most important roles.

That includes paid maternity leave and paternity leave, sick leave, accommodations for workers who are pregnant, good health care, affordable childcare, flexibility at work, equal pay, and a decent minimum wage. We ask our moms to do more than their fair share of just

about everything. Making sure they're treated fairly is the least we can do.

The idea of setting aside a Sunday in May for our mothers became an official holiday with a congressional resolution a little more than a hundred years ago. They did it on May 8, the same day we'll celebrate Mother's Day this year. If Congress can make a holiday, surely they can back it up with the things that give it meaning. After all, that's what my mother taught me. I couldn't just say I was going to do the right thing or say I agreed with it on principle, I had to actually do it.

So this Mother's Day, say thank you, say I love you, and let's make sure we show that gratitude and appreciation through acts of respect throughout the year. No one deserves that more than our moms.

Happy Mother's Day, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:20 a.m. on May 6 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on May 7. In the address, the President referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 6, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 7. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Commencement Address at Howard University
May 7, 2016

The President. Thank you! Hello, Howard! H–U!

Audience members. You know!

The President. H–U!

Audience members. You know!

The President. [*Laughter*] Thank you so much, everybody. Please, please, have a seat. Oh, I feel important now. [*Laughter*] Got a degree from Howard. Cicely Tyson said something nice about me. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. We love you, President!

The President. I love you back.

To President Frederick, the Board of Trustees, faculty and staff, fellow recipients of honorary degrees, thank you for the honor of spending this day with you. And congratulations to the class of 2016! Four years ago, back when you were just freshmen, I understand many of you came by my house the night I was reelected. [*Laughter*] So I decided to return the favor—[*laughter*]—and come by yours. [*Laughter*]

To the parents, the grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, all the family and friends who stood by this class, cheered them on, helped them get here today: This is your day as well. Let's give them a big round of applause as well.

I'm not trying to stir up any rivalries here; I just want to see who's in the house. We've got Quad? Annex. Drew. Carver. Slow. Towers.

Audience member. Meridian.

The President. And Meridian. Rest in peace, Meridian. [*Laughter*] Rest in peace. [*Laughter*] I know you're all excited today.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. You might be a little tired as well.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Some of you were up all night making sure your credits were in order. [*Laughter*] Some of you stayed up too late, ended up at HoChi at 2 a.m. [*Laughter*] Got some mambo sauce on your fingers. [*Laughter*]

But you got here. And you've all worked hard to reach this day. You've shuttled between challenging classes and Greek life. You've led clubs, played an instrument or a sport. You volunteered, you interned, held down one, two, maybe three jobs. You've made lifelong friends and discovered exactly what you're made of. The "Howard Hustle" has strengthened your sense of purpose and ambition, which means you're part of a long line of Howard graduates. Some are on this stage today. Some are in the audience. That spirit of

achievement and special responsibility has defined this campus ever since the Freedmen's Bureau established Howard just 4 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, just 2 years after the Civil War came to an end. They created this university with a vision: a vision of uplift; a vision for an America where our fates would be determined not by our race, gender, religion, or creed, but where we would be free, in every sense, to pursue our individual and collective dreams.

It is that spirit that's made Howard a centerpiece of African American intellectual life and a central part of our larger American story. This institution has been the home of many firsts: the first Black Nobel Peace Prize winner, the first Black Supreme Court Justice. But its mission has been to ensure those firsts were not the last. Countless scholars, professionals, artists, leaders from every field received their training here. The generations of men and women who walked through this yard helped reform our government, cure disease, grow a Black middle class, advance civil rights, shape our culture. The seeds of change for all Americans were sown here. And that's what I want to talk about today.

As I was preparing these remarks, Vernon, I realized that when I was first elected President, most of you, the class of 2016, were just starting high school. Today you're graduating college. I used to joke about being old. Now I realize I'm old. [*Laughter*] It's not a joke anymore. [*Laughter*]

But seeing all of you here gives me some perspective. It makes me reflect on the changes that I've seen over my own lifetime. So let me begin with what may sound like a controversial statement, a hot take. Given the current state of our political rhetoric and debate, let me say something that may be controversial, and that is this: America is a better place today than it was when I graduated from college. Let me repeat: America is by almost every measure better than it was when I graduated from college. It also happens to be better off than when I took office, but—[*laughter*]—that's a longer story. That's a different discussion—[*laughter*]—for another speech.

But think about it. I graduated in 1983. New York City, America's largest city, where I lived at the time, had endured a decade marked by crime and deterioration and near bankruptcy. And many cities were in similar shape. Our Nation had gone through years of economic stagnation, the stranglehold of foreign oil, a recession where unemployment nearly scraped 11 percent. The auto industry was getting its clock cleaned by foreign competition. And don't even get me started on the clothes—[*laughter*]—and the hairstyles. [*Laughter*] I've tried to eliminate all photos of me from this period. I thought I looked good. [*Laughter*] I was wrong. [*Laughter*]

Since that year—since the year I graduated—the poverty rate is down. Americans with college degrees, that rate is up. Crime rates are down. America's cities have undergone a renaissance. There are more women in the workforce. They're earning more money. We've cut teen pregnancy in half. We've slashed the African American dropout rate by almost 60 percent, and all of you have a computer in your pocket—[*laughter*]—that gives you the world at the touch of a button. In 1983, I was part of fewer than 10 percent of African Americans who graduated with a bachelor's degree. Today, you're part of more than 20 percent who will. And more than half of Blacks say we're better off than our parents were at our age and that our kids will be better off too.

So America is better. And the world is better too. A wall came down in Berlin. An Iron Curtain was torn asunder. The obscenity of apartheid came to an end. A young generation in Belfast and London have grown up without ever having to think about IRA bombs. In just the past 16 years, we've come from a world without marriage equality to one where it's a reality in nearly two dozen countries. Around the world, more people live in democracies. We've lifted more than 1 billion people from extreme poverty. We've cut the child mortality rate worldwide by more than half.

America is better. The world is better. And stay with me now: Race relations are better since I graduated. That's the truth. No, my election did not create a postracial society. I

don't know who was propagating that notion. That was not mine. But the election itself—and the subsequent one, because the first one, folks might have made a mistake. [*Laughter*] The second one, they knew what they were getting. [*Laughter*] The election itself was just one indicator of how attitudes had changed.

Audience member. Four more!

The President. In my Inaugural Address, I remarked that just 60 years earlier, my father might not have been served in a DC restaurant, at least not certain of them. There were no Black CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. Very few Black judges. Shoot, as Larry Wilmore pointed out last week—[*laughter*]—a lot of folks didn't even think Blacks had the tools to be a quarterback. Today, former Bull Michael Jordan isn't just the greatest basketball player of all time, he owns the team. [*Laughter*] When I was graduating, the main Black hero on TV was Mr. T. [*Laughter*] Rap and hip-hop were counterculture, underground. Now, Shonda Rhimes owns Thursday night, and Beyoncé runs the world. [*Laughter*] We're no longer entertainers, we're producers, studio executives. No longer small-business owners, we're CEOs.

Audience member. Yes!

The President. We're mayors, Representatives——

Audience member. President of the——

The President. ——Presidents of the United States.

Now, I am not saying gaps do not persist. Obviously, they do. Racism persists. Inequality persists.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Don't worry, I'm going to get to that. [*Laughter*] But I wanted to start, class of 2016, by opening your eyes to the moment that you are in. If you had to choose one moment in history in which you could be born, and you didn't know ahead of time who you were going to be—what nationality, what gender, what race, whether you'd be rich or poor, gay or straight, what faith you'd be born into—you wouldn't choose a hundred years ago. You wouldn't choose the fifties or the sixties or the seventies. You'd choose right now.

Audience member. Yes!

The President. If you had to choose a time to be, in the words of Lorraine Hansberry, "young, gifted, and Black" in America, you would choose right now.

I tell you all this because it's important to note progress. Because to deny how far we've come would do a disservice to the cause of justice, to the legions of foot soldiers, to not only the incredibly accomplished individuals who have already been mentioned, but your mothers and your dads and grandparents and great-grandparents, who marched and toiled and suffered and overcame to make this day possible. I tell you this not to lull you into complacency, but to spur you into action. Because there's still so much work to do, so many more miles to travel. And America needs you to gladly, happily take up that work. You all have some work to do. So enjoy the party—[*laughter*]—because you're going to be busy. [*Laughter*]

Yes, our economy has recovered from crisis stronger than almost any other in the world. But there are folks of all races who are still hurting, who still can't find work that pays enough to keep the lights on, who still can't save for retirement. We've still got a big racial gap in economic opportunity. The overall unemployment rate is 5 percent, but the Black unemployment rate is almost 9. We've still got an achievement gap when Black boys and girls graduate high school and college at lower rates than White boys and White girls. Harriet Tubman may be going on the 20, but we've still got a gender gap when a Black woman working full time still earns just 66 percent of what a White man gets paid.

We've got a justice gap when too many Black boys and girls pass through a pipeline from underfunded schools to overcrowded jails. This is one area where things have gotten worse. When I was in college, about half a million people in America were behind bars. Today, there are about 2.2 million. Black men are about six times likelier to be in prison right now than White men.

Around the world, we've still got challenges to solve that threaten everybody in the 21st century: old scourges like disease and conflict,

but also new challenges, from terrorism and climate change.

So make no mistake, class of 2016, you've got plenty of work to do. But as complicated and sometimes intractable as these challenges may seem, the truth is, is that your generation is better positioned than any before you to meet those challenges, to flip the script.

Now, how you do that, how you meet these challenges, how you bring about change will ultimately be up to you. My generation, like all generations, is too confined by our own experience, too invested in our own biases, too stuck in our ways to provide much of the new thinking that will be required. But us old heads have learned a few things that might be useful in your journey. So, with the rest of my time, I'd like to offer some suggestions for how young leaders like you can fulfill your destiny and shape our collective future, bend it in the direction of justice and equality and freedom.

First of all—and this should not be a problem for this group—be confident in your heritage.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Be confident in your Blackness. One of the great changes that's occurred in our country since I was your age is the realization there's no one way to be Black. Take it from somebody who's seen both sides of debate about whether I'm Black enough. [*Laughter*] Past couple months, I've had lunch with the Queen of England and hosted Kendrick Lamar in the Oval Office. [*Laughter*] There is no straitjacket, there's no constraints, there's no litmus test for authenticity.

Look at Howard. One thing most folks don't know about Howard is how diverse it is.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. When you arrived here, some of you were, like, oh, they've got Black people in Iowa? [*Laughter*] But it's true. This class comes from big cities and rural communities, and some of you crossed oceans to study here. You shatter stereotypes. Some of you come from a long line of Bison. Some of you are the first in your family to graduate from college. You all talk different, you all dress different. You're Lakers fans, Celtics fans, maybe even some hockey fans.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. [*Laughter*] And because of those who've come before you, you have models to follow. You can work for a company or start your own. You can go into politics or run an organization that holds politicians accountable. You can write a book that wins the National Book Award, or you can write the new run of "Black Panther." Or, like one of your alumni, Ta-Nehisi Coates, you can go ahead and just do both. You can create your own style, set your own standard of beauty, embrace your own sexuality. Think about an icon we just lost, Prince. He blew up categories. People didn't know what Prince was doing. [*Laughter*] And folks loved him for it.

You need to have the same confidence. Or as my daughters tell me all the time, "You be you, Daddy." [*Laughter*] Sometimes, Sasha puts a variation on it: "You do you, Daddy." [*Laughter*] And because you're a Black person doing whatever it is that you're doing, that makes it a Black thing. [*Laughter*] Feel confident.

Second, even as we each embrace our own beautiful, unique, and valid versions of our Blackness, remember the tie that does bind us as African Americans, and that is our particular awareness of injustice and unfairness and struggle. That means we cannot sleepwalk through life. We cannot be ignorant of history. We can't meet the world with a sense of entitlement. We can't walk by a homeless man without asking why a society as wealthy as ours allows that state of affairs to occur. We can't just lock up a low-level dealer without asking why this boy, barely out of childhood, felt he had no other options. We have cousins and uncles and brothers and sisters who we remember were just as smart and just as talented as we were, but somehow got ground down by structures that are unfair and unjust.

And that means we have to not only question the world as it is and stand up for those African Americans who haven't been so lucky. Because, yes, you've worked hard, but you've also been lucky. That's a pet peeve of mine:

People who have been successful and don't realize they've been lucky. That God may have blessed them; it wasn't nothing you did. So don't have an attitude. But we must also expand our moral imaginations to understand and empathize with all people who are struggling, not just Black folks who are struggling—the refugee, the immigrant, the rural poor, the transgender person, and yes, the middle-aged White guy who may—you may think has all the advantages, but over the last several decades has seen his world upended by economic and cultural and technological change and feels powerless to stop it. You've got to get in his head too.

Number three, you have to go through life with more than just passion for change, you need a strategy. I'll repeat that: I want you to have passion; you have to have a strategy. Not just awareness, but action. Not just hashtags, but votes.

You see, change requires more than righteous anger. It requires a program, and it requires organizing. At the 1964 Democratic Convention, Fannie Lou Hamer—5 feet 4 inches tall—gave a fiery speech on the national stage. But then, she went back home to Mississippi and organized cotton pickers. And she didn't have the tools and technology where you can whip up a movement in minutes. She had to go door to door. And I'm so proud of the new guard of Black civil rights leaders who understand this. It's thanks in large part to the activism of young people like many of you, from Black Twitter to Black Lives Matter, that America's eyes have been opened—White, Black, Democrat, Republican—to the real problems, for example, in our criminal justice system.

But to bring about structural change, lasting change, awareness is not enough. It requires changes in law, changes in custom. If you care about mass incarceration, let me ask you: How are you pressuring Members of Congress to pass the criminal justice reform bill now pending before them? If you care about better policing, do you know who your district attorney is? Do you know who your State's attorney general is? Do you know the difference? Do you know who appoints the police chief and who writes the police training manual? Find out who they are, what their responsibilities are. Mobilize the community, present them with a plan, work with them to bring about change, hold them accountable if they do not deliver. Passion is vital, but you've got to have a strategy.

And your plan better include voting, not just some of the time, but all of the time. It is absolutely true that 50 years after the Voting Rights Act, there are still too many barriers in this country to vote. There are too many people trying to erect new barriers to voting. This is the only advanced democracy on Earth that goes out of its way to make it difficult for people to vote.

Audience member. Yes.

The President. And there's a reason for that. There's a legacy to that.

But let me say this: Even if we dismantled every barrier to voting, that alone would not change the fact that America has some of the lowest voting rates in the free world. In 2014, only 36 percent of Americans turned out to vote in the midterms: second lowest participation rate on record. Youth turnout—that would be you—was less than 20 percent. Less than 20 percent. Four out of five did not vote. In 2012, nearly two in three Americans—African Americans turned out. And then, in 2014, only two in five turned out. You don't think that made a difference in terms of the Congress I've got to deal with? [*Laughter*] And then, people are wondering, well, why—how come Obama hasn't gotten this done? How come he didn't get that done? [*Laughter*] You don't think that made a difference? What would have happened if you had turned out at 50, 60, 70 percent, all across this country? People try to make this political thing really complicated. Like, well, what kinds of reforms do we need? And how do we need to do that, and what? You know what, just vote. [*Laughter*] It's math. If you have more votes than the other guy, you get to do what you want. [*Laughter*] It's not that complicated.

And you don't have excuses. You don't have to guess the number of jellybeans in a jar or

bubbles on a bar of soap to register to vote. You don't have to risk your life to cast a ballot. Other people already did that for you. Your grandparents, your great-grandparents—might be here today—they were working on it. What's your excuse? When we don't vote, we give away our power, disenfranchise ourselves, right when we need to use the power that we have, right when we need your power to stop others from taking away the vote and rights of those more vulnerable than you are: the elderly and the poor, the formerly incarcerated trying to earn their second chance.

So you've got to vote all the time, not just when it's cool, not just when it's time to elect a President, not just when you're inspired. It's your duty. When it's time to elect a Member of Congress or a city councilman or a school board member or a sheriff. That's how we change our politics; by electing people at every level who are representative of and accountable to us. It is not that complicated. Don't make it complicated.

And finally, change requires more than just speaking out. It requires listening as well. In particular, it requires listening to those with whom you disagree and being prepared to compromise. When I was a State senator, I helped pass Illinois's first racial profiling law and one of the first laws in the Nation requiring the videotaping of confessions in capital cases. And we were successful because, early on, I engaged law enforcement. I didn't say to them, oh, there's—you guys are so racist, I—you need to do something. I understood, as many of you do, that the overwhelming majority of police officers are good and honest and courageous and fair and love the communities they serve.

And we knew there were some bad apples and that even good cops with the best of intentions—including, by the way, African American police officers—might have unconscious biases, as we all do. So we engaged, and we listened, and we kept working until we built consensus. And because we took the time to listen, we crafted legislation that was good for the police, because it improved the trust and cooperation of the community, and it was good for the communities, who were less likely to be treated unfairly. And I can say this unequivocally: Without at least the acceptance of the police organizations in Illinois, I could never have gotten those bills passed. It's very simple. They would have blocked them.

The point is, you need allies in a democracy. That's just the way it is. It can be frustrating, and it can be slow. But history teaches us that the alternative to democracy is always worse. That's not just true in this country. It's not a Black or White thing. Go to any country where the give and take of democracy has been repealed by one-party rule, and I will show you a country that does not work.

And democracy requires compromise, even when you are a hundred-percent right. This is hard to explain sometimes. You can be completely right, and you still are going to have to engage folks who disagree with you. If you think that the only way forward is to be as uncompromising as possible, you will feel good about yourself, you will enjoy a certain moral purity, but you're not going to get what you want. And if you don't get what you want long enough, you will eventually think the whole system is rigged. And that will lead to more cynicism and less participation and a downward spiral of more injustice and more anger and more despair. And that's never been the source of our progress. That's how we cheat ourselves of progress.

We remember Dr. King's soaring oratory, the power of his "Letter From a Birmingham Jail," the marches he led. But he also sat down with President Johnson in the Oval Office to try and get a Civil Rights Act and a Voting Rights Act passed. And those two seminal bills were not perfect, just like the Emancipation Proclamation was a war document as much as it was some clarion call for freedom. Those mileposts of our progress were not perfect. They did not make up for centuries of slavery or Jim Crow or eliminate racism or provide for 40 acres and a mule. But they made things better. And you know what, I will take better every time. I always tell my staff: Better is good, because you consolidate your gains and then

you move on to the next fight from a stronger position.

Brittany Packnett, a member of the Black Lives Matter movement and Campaign Zero, one of the Ferguson protest organizers, she joined our Task Force on 21st-Century Policing. Some of her fellow activists questioned whether she should participate. She rolled up her sleeves; she sat at the same table with big city police chiefs and prosecutors. And because she did, she ended up shaping many of the recommendations of that Task Force. And those recommendations are now being adopted across the country, changes that many of the protesters called for. If young activists like Brittany had refused to participate out of some sense of ideological purity, then those great ideas would have just remained ideas. But she did participate. And that's how change happens.

America is big, and it is boisterous, and it is more diverse than ever. The president told me that we've got a significant Nepalese contingent here at Howard. I would not have guessed that. [*Laughter*] Right on. But it just tells you how interconnected we're becoming. And with so many folks from so many places, converging, we are not always going to agree with each other.

Another Howard alum, Zora Neale Hurston, once said—this is a good quote here—"Nothing that God ever made is the same thing to more than one person." Think about that. That's why our democracy gives us a process designed for us to settle our disputes with argument and ideas and votes instead of violence and simple majority rule.

So don't try to shut folks out, don't try to shut them down, no matter how much you might disagree with them. There's been a trend around the country of trying to get colleges to disinvite speakers with a different point of view or disrupt a politician's rally. Don't do that, no matter how ridiculous or offensive you might find the things that come out of their mouths. Because as my grandmother used to tell me, every time a fool speaks, they are just advertising their own ignorance. [*Laughter*] Let them talk. Let them talk. If you don't, you just make them a victim, and then they can avoid accountability.

That doesn't mean you shouldn't challenge them. Have the confidence to challenge them: confidence in the rightness of your position. There will be times when you shouldn't compromise your core values, your integrity, and you will have the responsibility to speak up in the face of injustice. But listen. Engage. If the other side has a point, learn from them. If they're wrong, rebut them. Teach them. Beat them on the battlefield of ideas. And you might as well start practicing now, because one thing I can guarantee you, you will have to deal with ignorance, hatred, racism, foolishness, trifling folks. [*Laughter*] I promise you, you will have to deal with all that at every stage of your life. That may not seem fair, but life has never been completely fair. Nobody promised you a "crystal stair." And if you want to make life fair, then you've got to start with the world as it is.

So that's my advice. That's how you change things. Change isn't something that happens every 4 years or 8 years; change is not placing your faith in any particular politician and then just putting your feet up and saying, okay, go. [*Laughter*] Change is the effort of committed citizens who hitch their wagons to something bigger than themselves and fight for it every single day.

That's what Thurgood Marshall understood, a man who once walked this yard, graduated from Howard Law, went home to Baltimore, started his own law practice. He and his mentor, Charles Hamilton Houston, rolled up their sleeves, and they set out to overturn segregation. They worked through the NAACP, filed dozens of lawsuits, fought dozens of cases. And after nearly 20 years of effort—20 years—Thurgood Marshall ultimately succeeded in bringing his righteous cause before the Supreme Court and securing the ruling in *Brown* v. *Board of Education* that separate could never be equal. Twenty years.

Marshall, Houston, they knew it would not be easy. They knew it would not be quick. They knew all sorts of obstacles would stand in their way. They knew that even if they won, that would just be the beginning of a longer

march to equality. But they had discipline. They had persistence. They had faith and a sense of humor. And they made life better for all Americans.

And I know you graduates share those qualities. I know it because I've learned about some of the young people graduating here today. There's a young woman named Ciearra Jefferson, who's graduating with you. And I'm just going to use her as an example. I hope you don't mind, Ciearra. Ciearra grew up in Detroit and was raised by a poor single mom who worked 7 days a week in an auto plant. And for a time, her family found themselves without a place to call home. And they bounced around between friends and family who might take them in. By her senior year, Ciearra was up at 5 a.m. every day, juggling homework, extracurricular activities, volunteering, all while taking care of her little sister. But she knew that education was her ticket to a better life. So she never gave up. Pushed herself to excel. This daughter of a single mom who works on the assembly line turned down a full scholarship to Harvard to come to Howard.

And today, like many of you, Ciearra is the first in her family to graduate from college. And then, she says, she's going to go back to her hometown, just like Thurgood Marshall did, to make sure all the working folks she grew up with have access to the health care they need and deserve. And she puts it, she's going to be a "change agent." She's going to reach back and help folks like her succeed. And people like Ciearra are why I remain optimistic about America. Young people like you are why I never give in to despair.

James Baldwin once wrote, "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." Graduates, each of us is only here because someone else faced down challenges for us. We are only who we are because someone else struggled and sacrificed for us. That's not just Thurgood Marshall's story or Ciearra's story or my story or your story, that is the story of America: a story whispered by slaves in the cotton fields, the song of marchers in Selma, the dream of a King in the shadow of Lincoln, the prayer of immigrants who set out for a new world, the roar of women demanding the vote, the rallying cry of workers who built America, and the GIs who bled overseas for our freedom.

Now it's your turn. And the good news is, you're ready. And when your journey seems too hard, and when you run into a chorus of cynics who tell you that you're being foolish to keep believing or that you can't do something or that you should just give up or you should just settle, you might say to yourself a little phrase that I've found handy these last 8 years: Yes, we can.

Congratulations, class of 2016! Good luck! God bless you. God bless the United States of America. I'm proud of you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. in the Upper Quadrangle. In his remarks, he referred to Howard University honorary degree recipients actor Cicely Tyson, Eastern Virginia Medical School Chairman of Surgery L.D. Britt, and former U.S. Ambassador to Botswana Horace G. Dawson, Jr.; Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., member of the board of trustees, Howard University, who conferred the honoree degree on the President; comedian Larry Wilmore, Jr., host of the 2016 White House Correspondents' Association dinner; Michael Jordan, former guard, National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls, and principal owner, NBA's Charlotte Hornets; actor Lawrence "Mr. T" Tureaud; ABC network television producer and writer Shonda L. Rhimes; musicians Beyoncé G. Knowles-Carter and Kendrick Lamar Duckworth; Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom; Ta-Nehisi P. Coates, national correspondent for the Atlantic magazine, 2015 National Book Award recipient, and scriptwriter for Marvel's "Black Panther" comic book; Brittany Packnett, executive director, Teach For America St. Louis; and Natasha Shelton, mother of Howard University graduate Ciearra Jefferson.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Central African Republic
May 9, 2016

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13667 of May 12, 2014, with respect to the Central African Republic is to continue in effect beyond May 12, 2016.

The situation in and in relation to the Central African Republic, which has been marked by a breakdown of law and order, intersectarian tension, widespread violence and atrocities, and the pervasive, often forced recruitment and use of child soldiers, threatens the peace, security, or stability of the Central African Republic and neighboring states, and continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13667 with respect to the Central African Republic.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Paul D. Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Honoring the NCAA Women's Basketball Champion University of Connecticut Huskies
May 10, 2016

The President. Hey! Everybody, have a seat. You guys have been through this before. You know what to do. [*Laughter*] Sit down. So there's an old saying: You can't win all the time. [*Laughter*] Except, this team seems to consistently want to bust that cliché. Ladies and gentlemen, for the fourth year in a row, give it up for the NCAA Champion UConn Huskies! [*Applause*]

As you might be able to tell, there are some Huskies fans in the house. [*Laughter*] Almost the entire congressional delegation from Connecticut. Mr. Larry McHugh, chairman of the University of Connecticut Board of Trustees. David Benedict, the University of Connecticut's athletic director.

When I called Coach Geno to congratulate him for winning the title—again—I told him we have his room ready for when he gets here. It's a small room, with a cot. He doesn't get the Lincoln bedroom. But he does seem to spend an awful lot of time here. As it turns out, the Huskies are generous hosts as well. I've got an open invitation to join their Xbox 360 Rock Band group, the Delta Commas. [*Laughter*] Now, in 9 months, I will have some time on my hands.

But congratulations, Coach, on your 11th national championship. What an extraordinary record. He has now broken the record set by the legendary John Wooden for the most championships by a head coach in Division I sports. And this season, the Huskies broke another NCAA record: They won the most consecutive national championships by one team. Coach Auriemma's players will tell you he is

one of the foremost experts on tough love. I'm pretty good at that too. You can ask Malia and Sasha. [*Laughter*] But to an entire generation of athletes and young women, he has been a lifelong teacher and friend. And all of us, even Huskies' rivals, are going to be cheering him on when he takes Team U.S.A. to the women's basketball gold medal in the Olympics this year. [*Applause*] Bring home the gold!

This team has gone undefeated twice in the past 4 years, including this past season. It is a testament not only to Geno, but to the captain of this team and the NCAA Player of the Year, Breanna Stewart. When she was a freshman, Breanna said she came to UConn to win four championships. And I'm sure Coach was thinking, eh, don't put so much pressure on yourself. [*Laughter*] But if you've got it, if you can back it up, then you're not being cocky, you're just being accurate. [*Laughter*] And this team embraced her challenge.

Breanna and her fellow seniors Morgan Tuck and Moriah Jefferson led the team by making sure everybody else knew what was expected of them. Entering the first game of the season, they were 0–0 like everybody else. They were playing on the road, some of their best players had graduated, and expectations were high. But they quickly put any uncertainty to rest, blowing out Ohio State by 44 points. They'd win the rest of their games by an average of almost 40 points. Tough defense won the championship rematch against Notre Dame. Overall toughness won a hostile road game against the second best team in the country, South Carolina, before a sellout crowd of 18,000 fired-up fans. And from then on, they just marched straight to their fourth title.

But thanks to Coach Auriemma, this team has never let victory go to their heads. They are academic all-stars. Over half the team has a GPA of a 3.0 or higher. On Sunday, the seniors walked across the stage and received their diploma. And they're community leaders as well. They run a basketball clinic at Halloween for local kids, a food drive leading up to Thanksgiving, a blood drive for the Red Cross. They collect toiletries from their hotel stays throughout the year to donate to families in need. They filmed a video for elementary school students on the importance of being kind to one another. So these young women know what it means to give back to a community that gives them so much.

I have a feeling this team will be back again. I will not be. I'll be honest, Coach, I'll miss the visits, our annual phone calls. [*Laughter*] But I just want to say how incredibly proud I am of all that they have achieved. These women have broken so many records. We don't have time to run through all of them, but they—throughout, they've done it with grace and good humor and good sportsmanship and an outlook that serves as an example for young athletes—boys and girls—to look up to. Their triumphs are an example of the ways that sports can bring an incredible sense of competitive fire, but also teamwork and cooperation, discipline and hard work to a young person's life. They are going to continue to be great athletes. They're going to continue to be great role models.

I told them earlier that one of the things this program has done is that each year, it has set a high bar for excellence, and each year you see the women's game getting better and better and better and giving all the other teams around the country a mark to shoot for. And that is good not just for young women who can see an example of extraordinary athletic accomplishment that they can shoot for, but it's good for the boys too, because maybe the boys get a sense that they can't mess with the girls because the girls know what it means to be great athletes and great competitors.

So we could not be prouder of them, couldn't be prouder of the coach, couldn't be prouder of the program. Congratulations national champions, the UConn Huskies.

Head Coach Geno Auriemma. You know, the first time we came here in 2009, and then we came back, and we all enjoyed it, and we came back—[*laughter*]—and I remember saying to President Obama, I said, you know, your fourth year is coming up. And I said, I don't know what the future holds. I said, I know we're going to be back. [*Laughter*]

The President. That was true.

Coach Auriemma. And he said, so am I. [*Laughter*]

The President. That was true too.

Coach Auriemma. So, taking that, I was hoping that we could get the rest of the NCAA, after 4 years of Stewie and Moriah and Mo, we could just have a vote and see if we could have them for another 4 years. [*Laughter*] And unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. We've been fortunate to have Tuck and Moriah and Stewie for 4 years, and Briana joined us—Pulido. They've done something that is pretty incredible in the sense that every other player that goes to college for the rest of the time that they play basketball can never beat, can never top what they've done. Somebody can tie them, somebody can do exactly what they've done. But they go to bed at night, every night, knowing that no one in the history of basketball has ever done what they've done, and no one will ever be able to do more than they've done. And that's something that we all can be really proud of.

The President. Hey! [*Applause*]

Coach Auriemma. The trips down here are memorable because we know that the President is a tremendous basketball fan. He keeps on top of things. He picks us every year in the NCAA tournament. [*Laughter*]

The President. It's really tough. [*Laughter*] Clairvoyant. [*Laughter*]

Coach Auriemma. And you know—that's the last thing I'll say—you know, what I'm going to miss the most is—I don't know if you've ever gotten a phone call from the President—[*laughter*]—but my phone rings, and I look at my phone, and there is just, like, lines, and it says "Unknown Call." And I'm like, I'm not answering this. [*Laughter*] I don't know who it is. So I don't answer. And then, next day—unknown call. I put it away. The third day, it said, you'd better answer this. [*Laughter*] And I picked it up, and he's on the phone. And I'm going to miss the relationship. I'm going to miss coming down here. I'm going to miss his support that we have.

But if you've been paying attention to what's going on in the media these last 6 or 7 months, as time goes by, we're probably going to miss him more than he misses us. Thank you.

The President. Thank you. That's very nice. [*Applause*] Thank you. Thank you. That's very nice. Thank you. [*Applause*] Thank you. That's very kind. Thank you. I should point out—I don't know if maybe this is a secret—but we couldn't bring it out here. In addition to the traditional jersey and basketball, Coach brought me a rocking chair. [*Laughter*] Now, I'm not taking this as an insult. I'm assuming it was meant with love. But, Coach, I do want you to know I'm not going out to pasture here. [*Laughter*] In fact, I might even be able to come to one of your games live. So don't think you've gotten rid of me that easily. All right? Let's knock this down.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:41 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Breanna Stewart and Morgan Tuck, forwards, and Moriah Jefferson, guard, University of Connecticut Huskies. Coach Auriemma referred to Briana Pulido, guard, University of Connecticut Huskies.

Remarks on Signing the Defend Trade Secrets Act of 2016
May 11, 2016

I want to thank the outstanding Members of Congress who are standing behind me—a bipartisan group, who, working with our Trade Representative's Office, as well as our Patent Office, have not only developed, but actually passed for my signature the legislation that for the first time will provide civil actions for companies or individuals that are stealing trade secrets from our American innovators.

As many of you know, one of the biggest advantages that we've got in this global economy is that we innovate, we come up with new services, new goods, new products, new technologies. Unfortunately, all too often, some of our competitors, instead of competing with us fairly, are trying to steal these trade secrets from American companies. And that means a loss of American jobs, a loss of American markets, a loss of American leadership.

What these Members of Congress have done is to, on a bipartisan basis, pass a strong enforcement bill that allows us not only to go after folks who are stealing trade secrets through criminal actions, but also through civil actions, and hurt them where it counts in their pocketbook.

And so I want to thank everybody who's been working on this. I should add that Congress could do even more if we get the Trans-Pacific Partnership passed, because TPP contains additional enforcement tools for us to be able to make sure that any of the countries that are signed up for this have to work with us to prevent this kind of theft of trade secrets. And at a time when the Asia-Pacific region is growing rapidly and where American businesses are competing, unfortunately, one of the problems that we have in that region is the tendency to steal trade secrets, produce knockoffs for those markets, and we end up losing business, and that means we're losing American jobs.

So again, I want to thank everybody here who's done outstanding work. And I'm now going to use all these pens to sign it. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

I'm always happy when we pass bills. So I want to thank the bipartisan effort that this represents. There you go. Good job, people.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:43 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. S. 1890, approved May 11, was assigned Public Law No. 114–153.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Yemen
May 12, 2016

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13611 of May 16, 2012, with respect to Yemen is to continue in effect beyond May 16, 2016.

The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Yemen and others continue to threaten Yemen's peace, security, and stability, including by obstructing the implementation of the agreement of November 23, 2011, between the Government of Yemen and those in opposition to it, which provided for a peaceful transition of power that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people for change, and by obstructing the political process in Yemen. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13611 with respect to Yemen.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 12, 2016.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony for President Sauli Niinistö of Finland, Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven of Sweden, Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen of Denmark, and Prime Minister Sigurdur Ingi Jóhannsson of Iceland

May 13, 2016

President Obama. Good morning, everybody. Due to the possibility of thunderstorms, we decided to move our arrival ceremony indoors. Of course, our Nordic friends are used to tough weather. You should know that here in Washington we have not seen the sun for about 3 weeks, which you experience for months on end. But despite that fact, we want you to know that we are deeply happy to have all of you here.

We're honored to welcome not one nation, but five, our great Nordic friends and partners: President Niinistö and Mrs. Haukio of Finland; Prime Minister Solberg and Mr. Finnes of Norway; Prime Minister and Mrs. Löfven of Sweden; Prime Minister and Mrs. Rasmussen of Denmark; and Prime Minister Jóhannsson and Mrs. Ingjaldsdóttir of Iceland.

To you and your delegations, welcome to the United States. I'm going to try this as best as I can. *Tervetuloa.*

President Niinistö. Excellent. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. Velkommen. Välkommen. [*Laughter*] And *Velkomin.* [*Laughter*] Those I'm not sure were delivered perfectly, but I think the spirit was understood.

Today is an opportunity for Michelle and me to return some of the warmth and hospitality that we've received on our visits to Copenhagen and Oslo and during my visit to Stockholm. And to Americans who cannot visit themselves, don't worry, I understand that Sweden has a phone number where you can call a Swede and learn about all things Swedish. Iceland invites you to send your questions to #AskGudmunder—[*laughter*]—I gather that Iceland has a lot of folks named Gudmunder—and they'll answer.

But they are extraordinary countries. And most importantly, for our purposes here today, they are extraordinarily friendly—extraordinary friends. This is also a special day for the millions of Americans who proudly trace their ancestry to Nordic countries, particularly in the Midwest, including my home State of Illinois. They'll remind you that Leif Erikson reached this continent more than a thousand years ago. They honor their parents and grandparents who crossed oceans and carved out new lives and helped build our country. They wear their wooly sweaters; they display Dala horses and love lutefisk and lefse. [*Laughter*] This is the history and the heritage and the ties of family and friendship that bring us together here today.

Around the world, America's closest partners are democracies. And we only need to look at our Nordic friends to see why. We share the same interests and we share the same values. We believe that our citizens have the right to live in freedom and security: free from terrorism and in a Europe where smaller nations are not bullied by larger nations. We believe in free markets and trade that support jobs and strong protections for workers and the environment and a strong safety net that provides a basic measure of security in life. We believe that we have a moral obligation—to this and future generations—to confront the reality of climate change and to protect our planet, including our beautiful Arctic.

We believe in societies that create opportunity for all people, through education, health care, and equal opportunity—including for women. In fact, in a world of growing economic disparities, Nordic countries have some of the least income inequality in the world, which may explain one of the reasons that they're some of the happiest people in the world, despite not getting much sun. [*Laughter*]

And we believe in the inherent dignity of every human being. We believe in pluralism and tolerance and respect for free speech and freedom of religion. It's why we welcome the

refugee who seeks a better life. It's why we stand up for human rights around the world. It's why our nations are leading contributors of humanitarian and development aid: to spare a child, even on the other side of the world, a preventable disease; to give girls, even on the other side of the world, the chance at an education; and to end the outrage of extreme poverty.

In their own region and with the world, the Nordic countries are a model of cooperation, and they consistently punch above their weight in meeting the challenges of our time. Our Nordic partners are not large countries, but there are almost no issues that we deal with—whether in terms of security or economics or humanitarian assistance—where the Nordic countries are not some of our most reliable and effective and important partners. And that's why I wanted to invite them here today, because sometimes, we have a tendency to take our best friends for granted, and it's important that we not do so. They have been extraordinarily important for us in shaping and maintaining an international order that is rule based, that is fair, that is just.

So I really do believe that the world would be more secure and more prosperous if we just had more partners like our Nordic countries. [*Laughter*] There have been times where I've said, why don't we just put all these small countries in charge for a while? [*Laughter*] And they could clean things up. [*Laughter*]

Now, I will admit that, to our American ears, Nordic languages and expressions can sometimes be a little confusing. We have a television program here called "Game of Thrones"—that's what it sounds like sometimes. [*Laughter*]

But the truth is, they—we are grateful to everything that our Nordic friends have contributed to us, not just in terms of partnerships and politics, but also our culture. We read our children Hans Christian Andersen and Pippi Longstocking. Our children's imaginations come to life with Legos. Our homes and lives are infused with Scandinavian furniture and design. Some of us dance and sing to ABBA and Avicii. [*Laughter*] I do want to point out that Finland has perhaps the most heavy metal bands in the world—[*laughter*]—per capita and also ranks high on good governance. I don't know that there's any correlation there. [*Laughter*] Thanks to Nordic innovators, we share our music on Spotify, stay in touch by Skype, and millions spend what would otherwise be productive hours on Minecraft, Angry Birds, and Candy Crush. [*Laughter*]

The poet Henrik Ibsen once wrote that "a community is like a ship; everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm." As democratic societies, we believe that our ship is stronger when everyone has the opportunity to succeed. As free nations, we believe our world is safer when all of us contribute to security and peace. So, to my fellow leaders, this is the work I look forward to advancing with you here today. And in that spirit, I welcome you all, once again, to the United States of America.

Now, given the unique nature of this visit, we have an unusual arrangement to our program. Throughout the day, we are going to hear from all five Nordic leaders, but we're not going to have them speak consecutively in each occasion. Otherwise, we'd be here all day. [*Laughter*] So because the Nordic countries are famous for their cooperation, there has been an allocation of time, and we're going to begin this morning with President Niinistö of Finland and Prime Minister Solberg of Norway. So they will provide us some brief remarks, and you will hear from the other leaders later in the—today.

Mr. Prime Minister.

President Niinistö. Mr. President and Mrs. Obama, we, the leaders of the five Nordic countries and our spouses are grateful to you for inviting us and convening this second U.S.-Nordic summit. Thank you for the wonderful welcome.

Already, upon arrival, the flags on Pennsylvania Avenue gave a heartening feeling to us. Dear President, I have to apologize that we forgot to take the sun with us. [*Laughter*] We have had a lot of sunshine this spring. [*Laughter*]

The Nordics are a family with a profound commonality of values and history and with strong ties of cooperation. With you, Mr. President, we feel we have a kindred spirit. Gender

equality, equal opportunities, and human rights for all, democracy, the rule of law, and respect of international law—these are hallmarks of our societies and an agenda that we share. Together, the Nordics are a superpower; not militarily, but when it comes to innovation, education, competitiveness, sustainable development, and clean technologies. See, together, we are the world's 12th largest economy. Free trade is clearly in our interest. We also claim superpower status as far as culture and sports are concerned. And as you see, we are champions in modesty too. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, we are grateful for the leadership that the United States has shown in combating the most existential threat in the world—that is climate change—and focusing attention to the Arctic, where we are practically neighbors. The Arctic Council can be used also as an instrument of confidence building. The Nordic countries give high value to multilateral cooperation, which you have stressed during your tenure. This is vitally important.

Times are turbulent in many respects. Security threats abound. The situation has become more tense, even in the Baltic Sea region and northern Europe, our neck of the woods. Strengthening security and stability there is called for, and this includes appropriate dialogue with Russia to enhance transparency and reduce risks.

The Nordic countries are, in many ways, security providers in our own region and Europe, but also globally. We shoulder our responsibilities. We seek solutions instead of problems. We are willing and able to continue to cooperate with you in promoting security and stability. We value highly the U.S. commitment to Europe and to our security.

Finland is proud of the longstanding and firm friendship with the U.S. It is based on common values and interests, proud contacts between our people, and vibrant interaction, economically and socially. We are committed to strengthening this partnership even further.

Today I am honored to say to you on behalf of the Nordic countries: In us, Nordic countries, Mr. President, the United States has a solid friend and a strong partner. We are willing to work together with the United States to build a better future for the whole mankind. Thank you.

Prime Minister Solberg. President, First Lady, Nordic colleagues, distinguished guests, and dear friends: Thank you very much for the very warm welcome you've given both to my husband and me and the other members of our delegation. As you make the most of your final year in the White House, we are delighted to note, Mr. President, you have clearly saved the best for last. [*Laughter*]

A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of welcoming some special American guests to Norway. It was our annual NATO exercise, Cold Response. The exercise provided valuable joint training in winter warfare. But I'll be honest, and I'll confess that one of the highlights for the Norwegians is watching U.S. marines learning how to ski—cross-country ski. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, you stand shoulder to shoulder with us in the deep snows of Norway, just as our navy proudly patrolled waters of Hawaii, your birth State, 2 years ago during the RIMPAC exercise; just as we stood together after 9/11, and just as we now have joined forces in the fight against ISIL. This is the nature of our alliance and our partnership. We are bound by the experiences and the history that we share.

One of the marines I met in the NATO exercise in Norway was called Cage—Cage Solberg. [*Laughter*] As his name illustrates, there are millions of people of Norwegian descent in the United States. In fact, there are more here than there are in Norway. [*Laughter*] Thousands of Norwegians crossed the huge, expansive Atlantic Ocean in the mid-19th century to pursue the new opportunities for themselves and their children. They carried the dream of a better life in the United States.

Today, the Atlantic Ocean unites us more than it separates us. It has made Norway a seafaring nation, open to trade with the world and committed to developing our fish, gas, and oil resources in a sustainable matter. The Norwegian coastline reaches to the North Cape. Keeping close eyes on the development in the high north is a key priority for us. Preserving

stability and predictability in our own region benefits the entire NATO alliance.

And as close allies, we share common values. And that is, of course, no coincidence. In 1814, our Founding Fathers looked to America for inspiration in drafting the Norwegian Constitution. Our common values remain steadfast: freedom, democracy, equality, and human rights. Our values reflect the nature of our friendship and the partnership that we hold dear.

Today's U.S.-Nordic summit is a strong reminder of what we have achieved together. But we know there's more to be done. The United States is a great power, and the five Nordic countries have different roles to play in the international arena, but we can achieve great things when we pursue the same goals.

Mr. President, I would like to commend you on your leadership. Your commitment to achieving real progress in climate change was essential for the Paris Agreement. American leadership is key to ensuring the future of the planet. We share your dedication to disarmament and nuclear security. Nonproliferation, disarmament, and arms controls are key elements of international security. And we will support your request for bold new reductions on a reciprocal basis to make the world safer.

Mr. President, in New York last year, the international community established a roadmap for the future by agreeing on the sustainable development goals. If we make the right choices, over the next 15 years, we can eradicate extreme poverty, and we can have a fair and more peaceful future. And we can do all this in a way that safeguards the planet. Broad partnerships and innovative new approaches will be needed to achieve these goals. The United States and the Nordics will be in front. And we know of few ventures that will provide a better return than girls' education. I greatly appreciate the leadership of the First Lady, who has provided in this cause. It's a cause we share as women and as mothers and as leaders.

Today's summit is an important opportunity to advance the U.S.-Nordic cooperation and to reiterate the values that we share and the truths that we hold for being self-evident. Because we are stronger and more effective together, let us ensure that the bonds between us and our countries remain as powerful as they are today. Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody. We're going to go get to work. We're very grateful for the presence of our leaders here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:24 a.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House, where President Niinistö, Prime Minister Solberg, Prime Minister Löfven, Prime Minister Rasmussen, and Prime Minister Jóhannsson were accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. In his remarks, he referred to Swedish musician Tim Bergling, known as "Avicii." Prime Minister Solberg referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Sauli Niinistö of Finland, Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven of Sweden, Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen of Denmark, and Prime Minister Sigurdur Ingi Jóhannsson of Iceland

May 13, 2016

President Obama. Well, once again, I want to welcome our Nordic partners. The last time that we met together was 3 years ago in Sweden, and we had a very productive meeting again here today.

As I said this morning, the United States is grateful for the partnership that we have with all the countries represented around this table. They are, individually, not large countries in terms of population, but in terms of effectiveness, contributions, ideas, energy, they are enormously important players on the international stage. And the fact that our values and our interests align make them one of our most

important partners. So we very much want to thank their presence.

Given the threats of terrorism, our Nordic partners are making significant contributions in the fight against ISIL, including more special operations forces and aircrafts and trainers, more assistance to stabilize areas that have been liberated from ISIL and more humanitarian assistance to Syrians and Iraqis.

We discussed our counterterrorism cooperation, and that includes the need to share more information. And I want to thank Denmark for new commitments to the NATO mission in Afghanistan.

Beyond our military campaign, we agreed that we need to work together in support of a political settlement to end the Syrian civil war. And our countries will continue to work together to counter violent extremism and to prevent people from being radicalized in the first place.

I want to commend the contributions that these countries have made in absorbing refugees. And we had a significant discussion around the issue of migrants and refugees. I think it's useful for the American press to understand that, although some of the absolute numbers that are going into these respective countries may not seem that large, when you look at it on a per-capita basis, they are making an enormously generous effort to help people in great need. But it's important for the world to carry this burden alongside them and not allow any individual country to carry those burdens alone, which is part of the reason why I'm glad we'll get strong cooperation and participation in the summit on refugees that I intend to host in September in the margins of the U.N. General Assembly.

With regard to European security, as we head into the NATO summit in Warsaw, I'm pleased that Denmark and Norway will be joining the United States in contributing to an enhanced, allied, forward presence to bolster our collective defense in Europe. And all of our nations agreed to increase cooperation between NATO and the EU.

We agreed on the need to continue to support Ukraine and maintain sanctions against Russia until we can get a resolution, as was outlined in the Minsk agreements, and that those need to be fully implemented.

We're united in our concern about Russia's growing aggressive military presence and posture in the Baltic-Nordic region. We will be maintaining ongoing dialogue and seek cooperation with Russia, but we also want to make sure that we are prepared and strong, and we want to encourage Russia to keep its military activities in full compliance with international obligations.

As members of the EU, Denmark, Finland, Sweden are strong supporters of T–TIP. I reaffirmed my intention to try to get this done before the end of the year. And we discussed the importance of Europe's energy security, including diversification of suppliers and sources and routes.

Our six nations remain strong partners in climate change, including the implementation of the Paris Agreement and transitioning to a low-carbon economy. And as Arctic nations, we committed to conservation and sustainable development that prioritize our efforts to combat climate change. And we look forward to hosting the first-ever White House Arctic Science Ministerial this fall to ensure that we're working together on that issue.

And finally, all the leaders here are key partners in global development. The Nordic countries are some of the few countries—and by the way, the United States doesn't fall into this category of meeting the goals that had been set with respect to foreign aid and humanitarian assistance. And I'd like us to do even more. They're doing a great job. And the coordination in terms of global health security, in terms of encouraging women's education and inclusion in economies, developing sustainable development in poor countries, and eradicating extreme poverty, as was outlined in the 2030 agenda—all these countries have been outstanding leaders in this process. And one of the things we discussed is how we can coordinate better so that we get more effect from the common contributions that we're making in that regard.

So I thought this was a very useful and important conversation—although there was probably too much agreement—[*laughter*]—to make for as exciting a multilateral meeting as I sometimes participate in.

With that, what I'd like to do is to turn it over to Prime Minister Löfven, who is going to be sharing, I think, for the group their perspective on how the meeting went.

Stefan.

Prime Minister Löfven. Thank you, Mr. President. And thank you once again for inviting us Nordic leaders to this summit. We appreciate it very much.

We know that the United States and the Nordic countries, we share a great history. More than 11 million Americans have Scandinavian heritage. So we share that, but we also share many values. And that was clear today. Let me just give two examples.

First, we agree on the need of global response to common challenges. And the transatlantic link is more important than ever. It is actually key to preserving European and global security. And in times when basic rules and norms of international standards are contested, we stand side by side to defend them. We will not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea or accept Russian aggression in Ukraine. We are convinced that a negotiated two-state solution in—is urgently needed for peace and security for both Israel and Palestine and will require actions and responsibility.

We welcome the military progress made by the coalition against Daesh, while seeking to complement these efforts with strong political and civilian support. We have also agreed to work together to tackle the root causes of forced migration. I believe that we need a globally shared responsibility in handling the flows of migration, and we welcome the U.S.-led leaders' summit on refugees in September, to which Sweden will seek to actively contribute. And I will personally attend that summit. I think it's very, very important to have a global perspective on the migration issue.

The same goes for climate change. And I applaud President Obama's instrumental role in pushing for the climate agenda and a clean energy revolution in U.S. and globally. And our Nordic countries will gladly both cooperate and compete in the race to reduce emission. And I can also say that Sweden aims to be the first fossil-free welfare nation in the world.

Secondly, the U.S. and the Nordic countries share the belief that the best foundation for individual freedom are jobs, growth, and social investments. To create jobs, we need free trade, sustainable investment that embraces innovation and new technology. That is why I'm a staunch supporter of bringing the U.S. and EU closer together through a strong Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

But with freedom comes also responsibility. We strive for trade that is both free and fair, enables social development, creates better working conditions, and protects our environment. We share the belief that women's empowerment and participation in the workforce are necessary to achieve real, sustainable development. Gender equality is both financially smart and a fundamental matter of human rights.

Our five countries have developed what has been known as the Nordic welfare model to enable more people to work, to increase gender equality, and to create socially inclusive societies. And we are proud to see that those ideas are also discussed and developed here in the United States, with President Obama's strong efforts for affordable health care, socially—social safety nets, and higher education system for all.

I believe that seeing U.S. advance on these issues will create new ripples of hope for all of us who believe in social justice and individual freedom. And as we have read in the Atlantic, President Obama likes to say, if only everyone could be like the Scandinavians, this would all be easy. [*Laughter*] We don't know about that. But let me just add that we Scandinavians truly enjoy cooperation with the United States to

make life not only easier, but better and freer for all.

Thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known as Daesh.

Joint Statement of the United States-Nordic Leaders Summit
May 13, 2016

Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the United States reaffirm our deep partnership based on shared fundamental values.

Democracy, the rule of law, gender equality, respect for human rights, and the protection and equal treatment of all people without regard to race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity unite the Nordic countries and the United States and serve as a natural basis for our cooperation. Transparency, accountability and good governance, strong market economies, free trade, shared prosperity, open space for civil society, and sustainable development are keys to political stability and social well-being. We reaffirm our commitment to pursue these values and objectives and to work together to encourage other countries to do the same.

Building on the U.S.-Nordic meeting in 2013 in Stockholm, today we have pledged to deepen our cooperation on key international issues related to security and defense; migration and refugees; climate, energy and the Arctic; and economic growth and global development.

Security and Defense

The Nordic countries and the United States stress the importance of upholding the European security order and the fundamental principles of international law. Our countries are committed to strengthening investments in defense and military capabilities, as well as in diplomacy and regional cooperation, commensurate with a more challenging security environment. The Nordic countries greatly value the United States' commitment to Europe and its security. NATO remains key to transatlantic and European security, and the contributions of Sweden and Finland, including those they make as NATO enhanced opportunity partners, are highly valuable. The United States, Denmark, Iceland, and Norway are committed to building on NATO's enhanced opportunity partners' framework in order to promote a close political dialogue and military cooperation between Finland and Sweden and NATO Allies (28+2). Through their overlapping memberships in NATO and the EU, the Nordic states, and the United States take measures to increase regional security that are mutually reinforcing and contribute substantially to stability in Europe. The Nordic countries and the United States strongly support closer cooperation between NATO and the EU, and consider new areas of practical cooperation between the two to be a priority for the NATO Summit in Warsaw in July.

We share with the Baltic States an interest in strengthening the security and stability of the Baltic Sea region. The United States welcomes Nordic Defense Cooperation and intends to support its initiatives, including participation in training, exercises, and creative frameworks that deepen regional ties and promote security. We commit to improving our individual and collective capacity to withstand hybrid threats and to leverage appropriate political, economic, and military tools to strengthen national and regional resilience. In anticipation of the NATO Summit in Warsaw, Denmark and Norway are prepared to join the United States in contributing to enhanced allied forward presence. Concrete contributions will be developed in consultations with NATO allies in preparation for the NATO Summit.

The United States and the Nordic countries share a firm conviction that there can be no

compromises over the international security order and its fundamental principles. Russia's illegal occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea, which we do not accept, its aggression in Donbas, and its attempts to destabilize Ukraine are inconsistent with international law and violate the established European security order. The United States and the Nordic countries reaffirm our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Europe and the United States have reacted firmly to Russia's violations of international law in Ukraine. Sanctions against Russia for its actions in eastern Ukraine cannot be lifted until Russia fully implements its Minsk commitments. Our Crimea-related sanctions are also to remain in force until Russia returns this territory to Ukrainian control.

We expect the Ukrainian government to redouble efforts to adopt and implement effective reforms. The United States and the Nordic countries will continue to assist Ukraine actively in this effort. We strongly support the EU's Eastern Partnership.

The United States and the Nordic countries are concerned by Russia's growing military presence in the Baltic Sea region, its nuclear posturing, its undeclared exercises, and the provocative actions taken by Russian aircraft and naval vessels. We call on Russia to ensure that its military maneuvers and exercises are in full compliance with its international obligations and commitments to security and stability. Our countries recognize the need for an appropriate dialogue with Russia to be maintained to enhance transparency and reduce risk, and to address issues of common concern, including the counter-ISIL campaign and ongoing efforts to negotiate an end to the conflict in Syria.

The United States and the Nordic countries are committed to partnering together to strengthen international security and address global issues beyond Europe. Global stability requires determined steps to address the problems faced by fragile states and to address the root causes of conflict and instability. We together recognize Sweden's leadership on the International Dialogue for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding and acknowledge that the world's poorest and most vulnerable are increasingly concentrated in fragile states. We reaffirm our shared commitment to work together to promote resilient, democratic societies and to address the drivers of state fragility. We share a long-term commitment to stabilization and development in Afghanistan and are working to bolster the Afghan government and its security forces, maintain international support for Afghanistan, and encourage the Taliban to join a meaningful and inclusive peace process with the Afghan government. Denmark will further strengthen its contribution to NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan to around 100 military personnel and has also decided to sustain its financial support to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces with $15 million annually until 2020, setting a strong example for the international community heading into the NATO Summit in Warsaw. Achieving a negotiated settlement to the war in Syria is an immediate and pressing issue. The United States and the Nordic countries have a common aim in stabilizing the situation in Mali and the Sahel region as well as in Somalia and the Horn of Africa. The long-term stability of the Middle East requires that key players assume their responsibilities to make progress on Middle East peace. The situation on the ground shows the urgent need for a negotiated two-state solution, which remains the only way to achieve a sustainable, long-term peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Norway, as chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, will continue its efforts to support a sustainable Palestinian economy as a critical component of a political solution.

Terrorism and violent extremism are major challenges for the international community. The United States and the Nordic countries intend to work together to counter these threats as well as to address their root causes. As members of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, our collective aim is to degrade the capabilities of and to defeat Da'esh. We confirm our continued engagement in all lines of effort in the Coalition's fight against Da'esh in Iraq and Syr-

ia and in advancing stabilization, civilian support, and humanitarian aid in the region.

Denmark will redeploy F16 fighter jets, a C130J transport aircraft, and make additional troop contributions, including special operation forces, for operations in Iraq and Syria. Denmark will also support stabilization efforts in Iraq and Syria with at least $40 million over the next three years, and has pledged $47 million in 2016 for humanitarian relief in Syria. Finland is enhancing its contribution to Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq by providing up to 100 training staff in the fall of 2016. Finland is committing $29 million for humanitarian relief in Syria in 2016. From the beginning of the crisis, Finnish humanitarian assistance has amounted to more than $120 million. Norway has stepped up its military contribution to the coalition against ISIL, and will continue to train Iraqi soldiers and will deploy a contingent of around 60 soldiers that will provide training, advice and operational support to Syrian local forces fighting ISIL. Norway has recently pledged $1.2 billion over 4 years in humanitarian aid to Syria and has pledged $24 million to stabilization efforts, including $3.1 million in 2016 for demining in Iraq. Sweden is contributing military trainers in Iraq, has provided over $400 million in humanitarian aid to Iraq and Syria since 2011, and has committed $200 million in development assistance to address the Syrian crisis over 5 years. The US is leading the global coalition to counter ISIL and is the largest contributor of stabilization and humanitarian assistance to Iraq and Syria, most recently announcing an additional $155 million in humanitarian relief for Iraq and contributing over $600 million for Syria, as announced at the recent London Conference.

The United States and the Nordic countries will continue to work together, exchange information, and share experiences on preventing and countering violent extremism. Nordic and U.S. local officials and civil society leaders plan to exchange best practices for local CVE programming. We encourage Nordic and U.S. cities to join the Strong Cities Network in order to share their experiences and reach out to other cities around the world. We also encourage youth to join the Youth Civil Activism Network to find innovative ways to counter violent extremism.

Civilian support and stabilization in post-conflict countries must address the humanitarian hazards posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO). Building on the U.S.-Norwegian Demining Initiative for Colombia, The United States and Nordic countries commit to establishing a new U.S.-Nordic partnership to support the removal of such weapons, making post-conflict communities safer and setting the stage for recovery and development. The United States and Nordic countries encourage other countries as well as private sector participants to join this new partnership. Nordic countries commit to provide more than $13 million toward UXO removal in Syria and Iraq, with a focus on efforts in Ramadi and other areas liberated from ISIL.

Cyberspace issues, including cybersecurity, the application of international law and norms in cyberspace, and Internet governance pose pressing and continuously evolving challenges. We acknowledge that cyber threats undermine our collective ability to use the Internet to bolster economic growth and development around the world. In cyberspace, just as elsewhere, states have a special responsibility to promote security, stability, and economic ties with other nations. In support of that objective, we affirm that no state should conduct or knowingly support cyber-enabled theft of intellectual property, including trade secrets or other confidential business information, with the intent of providing competitive advantages to companies or commercial sectors. We also endorse the 2015 report of the UN Group of Governmental Experts in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, affirm that existing international law, in particular the UN Charter, applies to state conduct in cyberspace, and commit ourselves to the view that all states should abide by voluntary and non-binding norms of responsible state behavior in cyberspace during peacetime.

Major progress has been made in promoting crisis management—both military and civilian—as

highlighted by the Leaders' Summit on UN peacekeeping in September 2015. The United States and the Nordic countries intend to continue to engage in making UN peace operations more effective, efficient and responsive, based on the recommendations of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. Preventive action and peacebuilding are essential.

Women's full and meaningful participation in all aspects of social and political life is key to sustainable peace, security and development. The Nordic countries and the United States believe that gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls are important goals in their own right, as well as powerful instruments for building human capacity and promoting social and political stability. The United States and the Nordic countries will continue empowering women and highlighting the importance of women's active participation in conflict prevention and resolution, peace processes, mediation, peacemaking, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, and post-conflict reconstruction as set forth in UNSCR 1325 and its progeny. Both the Nordic Women Mediators' Network and the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations are valuable contributions. We reaffirm the importance of making all efforts to prevent gender-based and sexual violence, to support victims, and to hold perpetrators to account in order to redress the culture of impunity that often surrounds such acts of violence. The United States and the Nordic countries encourage partners to join the initiative Call to Action on Protection from gender-based Violence in Emergencies, for which Sweden recently took over the chairmanship from the United States. We are committed to strengthening the UN Peace and Security Agenda.

Arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation are major areas for cooperation for the United States and Nordic countries. Our countries are committed to working together in promoting nuclear security, disarmament and non-proliferation. Building on the achievements of the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit, the United States and the Nordic countries intend to work together within the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency, INTERPOL, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and the Global Partnership to promote improvements in nuclear security and to counter nuclear smuggling. We are committed to full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 on preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-state actors. The United States and Nordic countries intend to continue to show leadership toward minimizing the use of highly enriched uranium in civilian applications. The destruction of Syria's declared chemical weapons was an important achievement in which cooperation between the United States, Denmark, Finland, and Norway played a prominent role, and we continue to press Syria with respect to omissions and discrepancies in its declaration. We share a common view on the importance of implementing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran. Norway contributed to the removal of Iran's low-enriched uranium in December 2015.

The Nordic countries and the United States support the objectives set out in the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) and commit to assist a number of developing countries to meet their obligations under international health regulations, including by developing and assisting with implementation of a national plan to achieve the targets of the GHSA. In this regard, the United States will assist at least 31 countries, and Nordic Countries will collectively assist 10 countries. The United States and Nordic Countries will also support Joint External Evaluations, developed under the leadership of the United States and Finland, including by providing technical and/or financial assistance.

The United States and the Nordic countries reaffirm our support for the UN and for mediation, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, as well as for the development of peacebuilding and peacekeeping operations. The U.S.-Nordic Security Dialogue continues to be an important forum for deliberations on these issues.

Migration and Refugees

Today the number of irregular migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people is on a scale unprecedented since World War II. This is a global challenge requiring a comprehensive and systematic response. The United States and the Nordic countries commit to work together to meet urgent humanitarian needs and promote solutions that deal with the root causes of irregular migration, address associated challenges such as human smuggling and trafficking, and seek global solutions that promote respect for the right to seek and attain asylum, taking into account regional responsibility-sharing arrangements.

Legal pathways to immigration and orderly refugee resettlement are a superior alternative to irregular migratory movements, and also reduce risks of discrimination and abuse to members of more vulnerable groups such as older persons, persons with disabilities, women, and children.

Nordic countries and the United States are world leaders in humanitarian response and have historically taken in a large share of refugees. We intend to maintain our humanitarian record and to advance measures to make the international humanitarian response more effective, efficient and fully able to respond to today's challenges. Further, the United States is committed to working alongside Europe in dealing with the global refugee and migration crisis and by addressing its root causes. Support to the regions hardest affected by the refugee crisis is one of the most effective components of a sustainable solution.

There is a clear link between forced displacements and the lack of good governance, rule of law and respect for human rights. We emphasize the responsibility of states to protect their populations from genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and war crimes.

There is a fundamental need to strengthen humanitarian response, to fashion a long-term approach to managing migration and recurring and protracted crises and to identify global solutions based on responsibility sharing and respect for international human rights. The World Humanitarian Summit in May, the UN High-Level Meeting on Addressing Large Scale Movements of Refugees and Migrants, and the U.S.-led Leaders' Summit on Refugees in September are excellent opportunities for addressing humanitarian challenges and irregular migration, and advancing concrete and comprehensive solutions for vulnerable refugee populations.

Climate Change, Energy and the Arctic

The leaders recognize that climate change is one of the foremost challenges the world is facing. No effort should be spared in making concrete progress domestically and abroad over the coming decades by shifting to low carbon economies and creating more resilient communities. The United States and the Nordic countries acknowledge the foundational role energy plays in our economies and that energy security is key for overall security.

Building on a history of collaboration, the United States and the Nordic countries commit to strengthening European energy security and to join and implement the Paris Agreement, accelerate the transition to a clean energy future, strengthen adaptation efforts, especially in developing countries, protect and restore forests, and continue to take science-based steps to protect the Arctic and its peoples.

Energy Security

The United States and the Nordic countries agree that a well-functioning, integrated and efficient European energy market is important to producing economic prosperity and energy security. Diversified supply sources and routes are a prerequisite for an efficient energy market and the security of Europe's energy supply. We support the EU goal of increased diversification of supply sources and routes, increased indigenous and sustainable production, greater levels of interconnection, and enhanced energy efficiency. We also support the efforts of EU countries to further improve the functioning of the market, including by establishing more

infrastructure to enhance the efficiency of the market and by developing a more effective regulatory framework to promote energy security and support diversification of fuel types, sources, and routes for energy imports. These steps are preconditions for energy security, affordable energy and an effective climate policy in Europe.

Implementing the Paris Agreement

The leaders commit to join the Paris Agreement as soon as possible. Norway, Iceland, and the United States have committed to join the Paris Agreement this year, building on more than 30 countries that have already joined or have committed to taking necessary domestic steps with a view to joining this year. As countries implement their respective Nationally Determined Contributions, they should strive to formulate and communicate long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies pursuant to the Paris Agreement.

The United States and the Nordic countries are committed to working with developing country partners to assist in strengthening their adaptation and mitigation efforts. We intend to make every effort to enhance the effectiveness of adaptation assistance by coordinating support for adaptation planning and action in appropriate fora, including the National Adaptation Plans Global Network. The United States and the Nordic countries recognize the potential for the effects of climate change to exacerbate conflict and fragility in vulnerable countries and share the view that foreign policy instruments must contribute to addressing this challenge effectively. We commit to prioritizing the prevention of compound risks stemming from climate fragility and to better integrating consideration of those risks into foreign, defense, and development policies, planning, and assistance programs.

The United States and the Nordic countries commit to provide leadership on climate finance. Following the Paris Agreement, it is critical to scale up support to developing countries to implement their respective Nationally Determined Contributions, including by using public resources to mobilize robust increases in private capital.

The United States and the Nordic countries will also work together to inform robust accounting for the use of international carbon markets, including a new offset program under the UNFCCC, to ensure the environmental integrity and to avoid the double counting of market-based mitigation actions.

Cooperation on Clean Energy

The world is facing a dual challenge: we need to meet the increased energy demand following a growing population and economic growth and at the same time, we need to reduce the emissions. A comprehensive change in the global energy system is required in order to reduce emissions. The United States and the Nordic countries will be at the forefront of efforts to develop cleaner energy systems, renewable energy, including renewable fuels, increased energy efficiency and technologies for cleaner energy production.

The leaders also intend to cooperate and use their influence in multilateral development banks and international financial institutions to decrease their carbon footprint by promoting an increase in their investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency. We will also advocate for public-private partnerships and the mobilization of private capital to finance climate investments and the transition to clean energy, including clean energy systems and other instruments mentioned in the Nordic declaration on innovative climate finance.

The United States and the Nordic countries are committed to promoting the aims of the Clean Energy Ministerial and Mission Innovation and to implement ambitious energy transitions to accelerate the deployment of clean energy sources. In particular, we intend to provide resources, and political support to establish a multilateral secretariat, including a financial contribution of $1.3 million from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland, and $1 million from the United States, along with continued, extensive support for Clean Energy Ministerial initiatives and campaigns.

Given the growing importance of offshore wind to their clean energy future, the United States and several Nordic countries commit to collaborate to increase the deployment of offshore wind in the United States and Europe. To formalize their collaboration, the Government of Denmark and the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management are announcing a new memorandum of understanding (MOU) to strengthen cooperation on offshore wind energy. The MOU highlights important priorities for cooperation and information sharing between the countries related to best practices for managing offshore wind, effective regulatory approaches, protection of the environment, and strategies to encourage expansion of offshore wind energy development. The MOU builds on ongoing U.S. engagement with Denmark on offshore wind.

Enhancing Climate Action through International Fora

The United States and the Nordic countries intend to support enhanced climate action by working together to achieve ambitious outcomes within international fora such as the Montreal Protocol and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). In particular, the United States and Nordic countries affirm their commitment to adopt a Montreal Protocol HFC phasedown amendment in 2016, and intend to provide additional support through the Protocol's Multilateral Fund following adoption of an amendment for its implementation. The United States and Nordic countries plan to continue to support a range of activities that promote alternatives to hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) with high global warming potential and to promote greener technologies in all countries.

The leaders also express their strong commitment to work together and through the ICAO to reduce international aviation's climate impact by fostering technological and operational advancements, development and deployment of sustainable alternative jet fuels, and adopting a strong global market-based measure (GMBM) to enable carbon neutral growth from 2020. They encourage world leaders to join them in supporting adoption at ICAO's fall 2016 Assembly of a GMBM that reflects environmental integrity and avoids market distortion.

The United States and Iceland reaffirm their support for the Global Geothermal Alliance launched during COP21 in Paris—a concerted effort by governments, international agencies and the private sector to promote wider penetration of geothermal in the global energy mix.

Combatting Methane Emissions

The leaders reconfirm our commitment to combat methane emissions as part of our commitment to implement the Paris Agreement, and in line with other international commitments and national priorities, by ensuring each country has developed a national methane reduction plan or otherwise identified and implemented enhanced actions to significantly reduce our overall methane emissions, and by expanding technical cooperation, where appropriate. We are determined to continue to drive down our oil and gas methane emissions, where applicable, through sound regulation, climate targets, and voluntary initiatives. In particular, we strongly encourage companies working within our countries to develop company-wide methane reduction goals, and to join the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) Oil & Gas Methane Partnership. The Nordic countries welcome the announcement of new U.S.-Canadian methane reduction goals from the oil and gas sector, and pledge to keep their respective methane emissions from this sector at or below current levels. The Nordic countries will also encourage other countries to join in this effort and would support the development of a global methane emission goal for this sector. We encourage other countries to do the same, and intend to communicate on our progress through international fora, such as the CCAC, Global Methane Initiative and the Arctic Council.

Collaboration on the Important Role of Forests

The Paris Agreement reflected the importance of forests and other lands in addressing global climate change. The United States and the Nordic countries are determined to cooperate to support and incentivize developing country forest partners to conserve, restore and sustainably manage forests, as well as strengthen their respective efforts to combat illegal logging and associated trade, thereby contributing to the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions by both reducing forest emissions and enhancing sequestration. The United States and the Nordic countries will also collaborate to facilitate private sector efforts to eliminate deforestation from the production of commodities such as palm oil, pulp and paper, cattle and soy. Today, the US and Norway are announcing that they will sign a joint statement to reinforce their intention to enhance cooperation on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) and sustainable landscapes. As a signal of their commitment, this week the United States announced the first results and a detailed action plan to reduce emissions and increase carbon storage in soils and forests through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Building Blocks for Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry. Through this initiative, USDA committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon stored in forests and soils by over 120 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year by 2025.

Promoting Energy for All

The Nordic countries and the United States commit to further strengthen efforts to achieve global access to sustainable, reliable, affordable and secure modern energy for all, consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This work will be pursued through a range of initiatives, including development support to mechanisms which seek to unlock investments in sustainable energy, such as through Power Africa as well as the Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa (SEFA). We also commit to work to further strengthen the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) initiative through support to the ongoing process of developing a new strategy for SE4All and its implementation. In addition, the United States and the Nordic countries intend to promote access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by encouraging the reduction of fossil fuel subsidies, promoting renewable energies and fuels, and enhancing energy efficiency.

In sub-Saharan Africa alone, more than two-thirds of the population is without access to power. To support a doubling of electricity access in sub-Saharan Africa the United States and Nordic countries have expressed our support for the Power Africa initiative and commit to work together to provide technical assistance, financing, and other support to enable additional investment in energy projects throughout the region. Since the launch of the Power Africa initiative in 2013, the Government of Sweden has commited to catalyze investments of one billion dollars to Power Africa. The commitment represents grants for distribution and transmission projects, and guarantees and loans for renewable Power Africa projects. In December 2015, Power Africa announced a new partnership with Norway, which aligns the collective investments of the United States and Norwegian governments in renewable energy and expands off-grid and mini-grid efforts. Through this partnership, Norway is committing to bringing 1,500 MW online over a five-year period, contributing to Power Africa's overall 30,000 MW electricity generation goal.

The Arctic

The United States, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden affirm our commitment to safeguarding the Arctic environment while providing enhanced opportunities for sustainable development for all inhabitants of the Arctic, including indigenous peoples.

The Arctic is rapidly changing and attracting global attention. It is a globally unique region that provides livelihoods for its inhabitants, but is also one of the most vulnerable regions to

climate change. Rich with opportunities for transport, tourism, energy, and innovation, the Arctic is characterized by close cooperation on a broad range of issues between the United States and the Nordic Countries, together with our Arctic partners Canada and Russia. Continuing to keep the Arctic region a zone of peace and stability is at the heart of our efforts. We reaffirm the importance of maintaining the Arctic region based on universally recognized principles of international law including those reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The Arctic Council celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, reaffirming its commitment to cooperation and coordination on matters of common interest among the Arctic States and indigenous peoples of the region. As the preeminent high-level forum among the Arctic States, the Arctic Council has proven instrumental in addressing new challenges and opportunities, while retaining a core focus on environmental protection and sustainable development.

The United States and Nordic countries will continue to work actively in the Arctic Council to ensure progress on shared priorities. The work of the current U.S. chairmanship and subsequent Finnish and Icelandic chairmanships will be closely coordinated to ensure effective progress on these priorities.

We will strengthen our work, both within the Arctic and globally, to address the environmental challenges facing the region. We remain committed to managing the region with an ecosystem-based approach, which balances conservation and sustainable use of the environment. We are committed to the pursuit of international and national climate change goals. We will work towards the highest global standards, best international practice, and a precautionary approach, when considering new and existing commercial activities in the Arctic, including oil and gas operations.

The United States and the Nordic countries are committed to recognizing the rights of the indigenous and local peoples and we reaffirm our commitment to the unique role played by Arctic indigenous and local communities and their traditional and local knowledge.

We will advance scientifically based protection and conservation of areas of ecologically important marine, terrestrial and freshwater habitats, taking into account ecological resilience in a changing climate and national and global climate and environmental goals. We are dedicated to promote the active involvement of the people of the Arctic in the management and sustainable use of protected areas.

We are committed to deepen the knowledge and understanding of the Arctic, both inside and outside the region, to strengthen Arctic research and transdisciplinary science, and to encourage cooperation between higher education institutions and society as well as synergies between science and traditional and local knowledge. The Nordic countries welcome the White House Arctic Science Ministerial.

Jobs, Growth and Trade

Economic freedom, open markets, and free trade are fundamental to maintaining prosperity and promoting welfare for our citizens. The Transatlantic economy is strong, and will remain at the core of the global economy. Together, the United States and the Nordic countries will continue to be a strong voice for open and sustainable trade and investments, and in particular commerce that embraces women's economic empowerment, innovation, and new technology. The Nordic region is among the largest foreign investors in the United States.

Digitization and sustainable production have the potential to contribute to more competitive economies and to strengthen our industrial sectors. The United States and the Nordic countries will continue to show leadership in R&D, innovation, digitization, the provision of platforms for new technology, and the launch of start-ups, all of which create jobs, enhance competitiveness and pave the way for improving our businesses and societies. Innovation is also central to targeting key challenges, including climate change, health, gender inequality, and urbanization. Ultimately, innovation is about finding ways to achieve

sustainable growth and sustainable societies. The United States and the Nordic countries will together promote innovation, including through the Nordic Innovation House in Silicon Valley.

We share the view that the multilateral trade system is crucial for the global economy and our intent is to work to bring the benefits of free trade and open economies to all. The United States and the European Union are working to complete negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T–TIP) in 2016. We also look forward to exploring ways to bolster trade and investment among the United States, Norway, and Iceland. Deepening transatlantic ties through trade and investment is in our economic as well as our strategic interests. The conclusion of an ambitious and comprehensive agreement would lower barriers, create opportunities for small businesses, and boost economic growth and job creation through exports in the United States and Europe. It would also benefit the global economy and further increase economic integration.

The United States and the Nordic countries have committed to promote productive employment and decent work as key elements to spreading the benefits of globalization and reducing poverty. We are resolved, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to reduce inequality within and among countries. Rising inequalities have a negative impact on current and potential growth. We also recognize that promoting gender equality and increasing women's labor market participation rates are important elements of sustainable growth.

The Nordic countries and the United States have always enjoyed intensive people-to-people contacts and exchanges. We share a joint desire to boost these contacts further and to enhance collaboration in innovation, higher education and research.

Global Development and Humanitarian Assistance

2015 marked a pivotal year for global development. World leaders from more than 190 countries adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which sets out a global development vision and priorities for the next 15 years, and adopted the Paris Agreement, the most ambitious climate change agreement in history. Sustainable global development is fundamental for peace and prosperity, and is inseparable from democracy, human rights and good governance.

We are fully committed to support the global effort to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda). The United States and the Nordic Countries reaffirm the universality of the 2030 Agenda, and commit to implementing it, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, both domestically and internationally. The United States and the Nordic Countries also commit to continue to work together, and individually, to support the efforts of developing countries to reach the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including by enhancing developing countries' ability to mobilize and effectively use their domestic resources and to attract private sector investment for sustainable development.

To protect development gains and respond to urgent humanitarian needs, the Nordic countries and the United States intend to maintain a high-level of humanitarian assistance, including in response to drought, floods and other climatic shocks exacerbated or induced by the El Nino and the La Nina phenomena, with special emphasis on the needs of women and girls and vulnerable groups within any affected population.

Gender equality is a central human right and a development issue. The United States and the Nordic Countries have a longstanding commitment to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, particularly adolescent girls around the world who are held back from reaching their full potential. We will support efforts to ensure that adolescent girls are provided opportunities to continue their education. We will continue to promote the empowerment of women and girls by enhancing representation and opportunity especially through global education and health, as well as advancing and protecting their health

and their sexual and reproductive rights. Additionally, reducing the barriers to education—such as lack of access, early pregnancy, the contraction of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, as well as harmful practices such as early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting—is critical to advancing the shared foreign policy, security and development priorities of the United States and Nordic countries.

Universal human rights belong to all individuals regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. The United States and the Nordic countries will work together in multilateral fora and at the national level to promote the protection of LGBTI people, ensuring that they can enjoy the same rights as everyone else.

The United States and the Nordic countries are committed to high levels of development cooperation, and intend to work to catalyze further private investments for sustainable development.

The United States and the Nordic countries are committed to leading by example to fight corruption and promote transparency and accountability. We will support countries in efforts to combat illicit financial flows and help build capacity for civil society to aid in the fight against corruption. Tax evasion and corruption undermine development and drain public resources, and are fundamental development issues. As an important part of financing for development, the United States and Nordic countries will work together to support the Addis Tax Initiative and we will support developing countries in their efforts to strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through enhanced taxation and new efforts to combat tax evasion.

The relationship between the United States and the Nordic countries runs deep. Our nations share a history of extensive societal ties that firmly bind us together. Through these strong personal and institutional bonds we will continue to promote our common commitment to freedom, democracy, universal human rights, and peace.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known as Daesh. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring President Sauli Niinistö of Finland, Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven of Sweden, Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen of Denmark, and Prime Minister Sigurdur Ingi Jóhannsson of Iceland

May 13, 2016

President Obama. Good evening, everyone. On behalf of Michelle and myself, welcome to the White House. And welcome to this very special dinner as we celebrate the great ties and longstanding friendship between the United States and our five Nordic partners.

Please join me in welcoming President Niinistö and Mrs. Haukio of Finland, Prime Minister Solberg and Mr. Finnes of Norway, Prime Minister and Mrs. Löfven of Sweden, Prime Minister and Mrs. Rasmussen of Denmark, and Prime Minister Jóhannsson and Mrs. Ingjaldsdóttir of Iceland.

Now, we all know that our Nordic friends share a pride in their common Viking heritage. But I think we can all admit that the Vikings could be a little rough. [*Laughter*] They didn't always have the best manners at the dining table. [*Laughter*] Their outfits were not always appropriate. [*Laughter*] But times have changed, and tonight our Nordic friends are much better behaved. [*Laughter*] We are honored to have you here. And as you can see from our decor, winter is coming. [*Laughter*]

This evening we have three toasts. So I'm going to be brief. And I don't want things to get out of hand. One of the great Old Norse

poems, the Hávamál from Iceland, offered advice on how to welcome a guest, sort of like a Miss Manners for Vikings. [*Laughter*]

> Less good than they say for the sons of men
> Is the drinking oft of ale
> For the more they drink the less they can think
> And keep a watch over their wits.

[*Laughter*] Good advice. It's perhaps easier said than done. It is true that our Nordic friends have a reputation today, unlike the past, for modesty and propriety. But don't let them fool you. In these Nordic countries, things actually can get a little wild. I understand that in Norway, for example, one of the big hits on TV is—[*laughter*]—"National Firewood Night." [*Laughter*] This is true. A video of logs burning for hours—[*laughter*]—and hours and hours. That's crazy. [*Laughter*] Another show involved a video camera being strapped to the front of a train, so viewers could watch the rails for 7 hours. [*Laughter*] This sounds like riveting entertainment. [*Laughter*]

So we're not going to do anything that crazy tonight. [*Laughter*] But we are grateful for our friendship with the Nordic peoples, even if we do sometimes get a little jealous about how perfect they seem to be.

If you've visited any of these Nordic countries, everything is orderly. Everything is clean. Everybody is well behaved. It even prompted a best selling book called "The Almost Nearly Perfect People." But there were some shockers. Apparently, Nordic countries can sometimes get into heated arguments about which country is happiest. [*Laughter*] They also do get into arguments about who has the better hockey players, until America steals them away. [*Laughter*] And they also have arguments about who has the honor of being the true hometown of Santa Claus. So these are fierce debates that take place among our Nordic friends. [*Laughter*]

But our work today actually does remind us of why we so value our Nordic partners so much. In each other, we find those who we work with in pursuit of common values that we cherish the most. We stand together so that citizens can live in security and peace. We labor so our economies can create opportunity where prosperity goes not just to the top, but to the many. Together, we're on the forefront of the fight against climate change, to preserve our glaciers, our fjords, to protect indigenous peoples of the Arctic. And in our own countries and around the world, we stand for the dignity and equality of all people.

And many of our Nordic friends are familiar with the great Danish pastor and philosopher Grundtvig. And among other causes, he championed the idea of the folk school: education that was not just made available to the elite, but to the many; training that prepared a person for active citizenship that improves society. Over time, the folk school movement spread, including here to the United States. And one of those schools was in the State of Tennessee; it was called the Highlander Folk School.

At Highlander, especially during the 1950s, a new generation of Americans came together to share their ideas and strategies for advancing civil rights, for advancing equality, and for advancing justice. We know the names of some of those who were trained or participated in the Highlander School: Ralph Abernathy, John Lewis, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. They were all shaped, in part, by Highlander and the teachings of a great Nordic philosopher. And they ended up having a ripple effect on the civil rights movement and ultimately on making America a better place. We would not have been here had it not been for that stone that was thrown in a lake and created ripples of hope that ultimately spread across an ocean to the United States of America. And I might not be standing here were it not for the efforts of people like Ella Baker and others who participated in the Highlander Folk School.

So that's just one small measure of the enormous positive influence that our Nordic friends have had on our country. It's part of the reason why we so value their friendship. I've said before—and I will repeat—they punch above their weight. And their values, their contributions not just to making their own countries function well, but making the whole world a better place makes them one of our most valuable partners everywhere in the world.

And we are very grateful for the outstanding work that they do.

So I propose a toast: To the friendship between us and the values that we share. May our nations keep standing together and bending that arc of the moral universe in the direction of justice and peace and equality for all. *Skål!* Cheers!

[*At this point, President Obama offered a toast.*]

And with that, I want to welcome Prime Minister Jóhannsson of Iceland, to be followed by Prime Minister Rasmussen of Denmark.

Prime Minister Jóhannsson. Mr. President, Mrs. Obama, let me begin by expressing my pleasure of being here tonight, for your gracious hosting of the Nordic leaders and for the warm welcome you have extended to Iceland. We are honored to be here as allies, as partners, and most importantly, as friends of the United States. We bring with us the warm greetings and good wishes of our people.

Relations between Iceland and the United States have always been strong. Our initial and ongoing defense partnership has blossomed into a broad friendship that includes deep commercial, academic, and cultural ties. And yes, that does sometimes include artists in swan dresses. [*Laughter*]

Our friendship is based on solidarity and cooperation on some of today's most complex problems. Building on our 2013 meeting in Stockholm at today's summit, I am pleased, we have recognized the excellent Nordic-U.S. cooperation and shared achievements. I'm also pleased that we have committed in our joint statement to further deepen and broaden our cooperation on several key international issues.

Our world views and interests align. We share the same values: respect for freedom and democracy, an unshakeable commitment to justice, human rights, and the rule of law. We are committed to the principles of gender equality and women's empowerment. We work together for peace and security.

As we near the end of your time in office, Mr. President, I would like to use this opportunity to commend your leadership, not least on the challenges of climate change, the conclusion of the Paris climate agreement, and on the Arctic.

The population of Iceland is a thousand smaller—a thousand times smaller than that of the United States. As you might expect from Viking-descended Northmen, we do not hide behind our apparent lack of superpower status. [*Laughter*] What we lack in manpower we make up in volcanoes. [*Laughter*] We are still figuring out how to aim them—[*laughter*]—however, so bear with us. [*Laughter*]

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to propose a toast: To the President, to the First Lady, to the people of the United States of America, and to the enduring friendship between our peoples. *Skål!*

[*Prime Minister Jóhannsson offered a toast.*]

Prime Minister Rasmussen. Mr. President; First Lady; dear colleagues from my neighboring countries; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen: "Once, I was 7 years old, my mama told me, go make yourself some friends or you'll be lonely." [*Laughter*] Those lyrics are from the Danish singer Lukas Graham's number-one hit song here in the U.S. And I'm a lucky guy because my predecessors didn't wait for this song to be released before they actually followed this advice.

And therefore, I'm so privileged and happy to be here tonight, surrounded by friends from the Nordic countries, but first and foremost, you, Mr. President, and your fantastic and dedicated wife, Michelle, and all of your fellow Americans. The United States is truly one of Denmark's closest friends.

The first time you invited me into the Oval Office, Mr. President, you said that Denmark is punching above our weight. It made me proud. It made us Danes feel a little special. Now, some 6 years later, I understand that not only Denmark, but all the Nordic countries punch above our weight. [*Laughter*] But nevertheless, I'm still proud. [*Laughter*]

And I truly believe the same goes for my colleagues. So you can count on us. And you know that. And that's probably why we are all invited here tonight, because we punch above our

weight. And we will continue to do so. And after tonight's splendid dinner, we will definitely step up into a whole new weight class. [*Laughter*]

The ties between the United States and the Nordics are strong and go way back. As you said, Nordic Vikings cross the Atlantic centuries ago and discovered amazing America. And ever since, millions have—and ever since, millions left our rainy and windy countries looking for a new start in America. Many of them settled in Minnesota. [*Laughter*] I guess the weather there made them feel right at home. [*Laughter*] And the Nordic settlers took part in making America bright and beautiful.

Scarlett Johansson, of Danish descent, is just a living proof of that. [*Laughter*] And the Swedes and the Finns and the Icelanders did their part too, contributing to the gene pool that gave you Julia Roberts, Matt Damon, and Uma Thurman. And the Norwegians, well, they gave you Karl Rove—[*laughter*]—among many other things. [*Laughter*]

So I guess it's true to say that we have had a certain impact on America—[*laughter*]—in many different ways. So the good question is, can we Nordics still contribute to America? And the answer is a simple as it is famous: Yes, we can!

Nordic architects like Bjarke Ingels contribute to transforming American cities with projects like the New York Dryline and the redesign of the Smithsonian here in Washington, based on a vision of making urban areas more livable, smart, and sustainable. Both the U.S. and the Nordic countries try to set positive standards for the world of tomorrow, taking the lead, so to speak.

And speaking of taking the lead, speaking of leadership, it is easy to see the importance and value of your leadership, Mr. President. So without interfering in American politics, I can truly and without a doubt say that you have been the best President Europe never had.

Now your Presidency is coming to an end. And I have something to admit. I'm very fond of Donald too. [*Laughter*] I support him as a President. He's really smart, shows great leadership skills, a true visionary. And I'm, of course, talking about Donald Tusk, our Polish President of the European Council. [*Laughter*] Which, in your absence, is the best President Europe could have. [*Laughter*]

Well, being a role model is not always easy, so I've heard. But you, Mr. President, have come to represent a dream for millions of Americans and people across the world. We share a common vision of securing good, affordable health care to all. And I greatly respect your achievement in this regard. Your leadership was also key to the Paris Agreement on climate change last year. And we continue—well, both of us were disappointed after Copenhagen, but then, we worked hard, and finally, in Paris, we succeeded. And we continue our work together on the green transition.

And recently, Mr. President, you swept the White House in the rainbow colors. Being the first country on Earth to allow same-sex partnership, Denmark admires and supports your fight for diversity and equal rights.

Nevertheless, your Presidency is slowly coming to an end. So Congress will probably try to block both of your initiatives in the time to come. I guess that can be frustrating. Believe me, being leader of a very small minority Government, I know that from personal experience. [*Laughter*] And if I may, allow me to give you a piece of personal advice. When I get too frustrated, I let off steam by cooking. [*Laughter*] And I can recommend that. And if you do take my advice, I think you could be inspired by the new Nordic cuisine. It already involves edible rarities such as moss, bark, and living ants. [*Laughter*] But maybe you could be helpful in our search for a recipe for lame duck. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, you are a great friend and ally. Sólrun and I will always be very happy to welcome you and your family in Copenhagen. And Denmark would, as all the Nordic countries, I believe, be honored to receive one of the most inspirational and charming figures in America—along with her husband, of course. [*Laughter*]

So, dear Michelle, dear Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, let me propose a toast for the strong relations between our nations, the very special cross-Atlantic friendship between

U.S. and the Nordic countries. To friendship. *Skål!* Cheers!

[*Prime Minister Rasmussen offered a toast.*]

President Obama. The dinner is now served. But I think we've just identified the next comic for the White House Correspondents' dinner. [*Laughter*]

Enjoy, everybody. Thank you!

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:54 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. John R. Lewis. Prime Minister Jóhannsson referred to musician and actor Björk Gudmundsdóttir. Prime Minister Rasmussen referred to musician Lukas Graham Forchhammer; actors Scarlett Johansson, Julia Roberts, Matt Damon, and Uma Thurman; and Karl Rove, former Deputy Chief of Staff and Senior Adviser to President George W. Bush.

The President's Weekly Address
May 14, 2016

The President. Hi, everybody. I've got a special guest with me this week, Macklemore. Now, for those of you who don't share the same love* for hip-hop that I do, he's a Grammy-winning artist, but he is also an advocate who's giving voice to a disease we too often just whisper about: the disease of addiction.

Musician Ben "Macklemore" Haggerty. Hey, everybody. I'm here with President Obama because I take this personally. I abused prescription drugs, and I battled addiction. If I hadn't gotten the help that I needed when I needed it, I definitely would not be here today. And I want to help others facing the same challenges that I did.

The President. Now, drug overdoses now take more lives every year than traffic accidents. Deaths from opioid overdoses have tripled since 2000. A lot of time, they're from legal drugs prescribed by a doctor. So addiction doesn't always start in some dark alley, it often starts in a medicine cabinet. In fact, a new study released this month found that 44 percent of Americans know someone who has been addicted to prescription pain killers.

Macklemore. I didn't just know someone, I lost someone. My friend Kevin overdosed on painkillers when he was just 21 years old. Addiction is like any other disease. It doesn't discriminate. It doesn't care what color you are, whether you're a guy or a girl, rich or poor, whether you live in a inner city, a suburb, or rural America. This doesn't just happen to other people's kids or in some other neighborhood. It can happen to any of us.

The President. That's why just talking about this crisis isn't enough. We need to get treatment to more people who need it. My administration is working with communities to reduce overdose deaths, including with medication. We're working with law enforcement to help people get into treatment instead of jail. And under Obamacare, health plans in the marketplace have to include coverage for treatment.

Macklemore. I know recovery isn't easy or quick, but along with the 12-step program, treatment has saved my life. And recovery works. We need our leaders in Washington fund it and for people to know how to find it.

The President. We all need to do more to make that happen. I've asked Congress to expand access to recovery services and to give first responders the tools they need to treat overdoses before it's too late. This week, the House passed several bills about opioids, which is great, but unless they also make investments in more treatment, it won't get Americans the help that they need.

On top of funding, doctors also need more training about the power of pain medication they prescribe and the risks that those pain medications carry. Another way our country can help those suffering in private is to make this conversation public.

* White House note: "Same Love" is the title of Macklemore's hit 2012 song about marriage equality.

Macklemore. When you're going through it, it's hard to imagine there could be anything worse than addiction. But shame and the stigma associated with the disease keeps too many people from seeking the help that they actually need. Addiction isn't a personal choice or a personal failing. And sometimes, it takes more than a strong will to get better; it takes a strong community and accessible resources.

The President. The good news is, there's hope. When we talk about opioid abuse as the public health problem that it is, more people will seek the help that they need. More people will find the strength to recover, just like Macklemore and millions of Americans have. We'll see fewer preventable deaths and fewer broken families.

Macklemore. We have to tell people who need help that it's okay to ask for it. We've got to make sure they know where to get it.

The President. We all have a role to play. Even if we haven't fought this battle in our own lives, there's a good chance we know someone who has or who is.

Macklemore. President Obama and I just had a powerful conversation here at the White House about opioid abuse and what we can do about it. You can catch it this summer on MTV. And to find treatment in your area, call 1–800–662–HELP.

The President. Thanks, everybody. Thanks, Macklemore.

Macklemore. Thank you.

The President. And have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:35 p.m. on May 12 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on May 14. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 13, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 14. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Commencement Address at Rutgers University–New Brunswick in Piscataway, New Jersey
May 15, 2016

The President. Hello Rutgers! R–U rah-rah! Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you, President Barchi, for that introduction. Let me congratulate my extraordinarily worthy fellow honorary Scarlet Knights, Dr. Burnell and Bill Moyers. Matthew, good job. If you are interested, we can talk after this.

One of the perks of my job is honorary degrees. [*Laughter*] But I have to tell you, it impresses nobody in my house. [*Laughter*] Now Malia and Sasha just say: "Okay, Dr. Dad, we'll see you later. Can we have some money?" [*Laughter*]

To the Board of Governors; to Chairman Brown; to Lieutenant Governor Guadagno; Mayor Cahill; Mayor Wahler, Members of Congress, Rutgers administrators, faculty, staff, friends, and family: Thank you for the honor of joining you for the 250th anniversary of this remarkable institution. But most of all, congratulations to the class of 2016!

Audience members. We love you! [*Laughter*]

The President. I come here for a simple reason: to finally settle this pork roll vs. Taylor ham question. [*Laughter*] I'm just kidding. [*Laughter*] There's not much that I'm afraid to take on in my final year of office, but I know better than to get in the middle of that debate. [*Laughter*]

The truth is, Rutgers, I came here because you asked. Well, now, it's true that a lot of schools invite me to their commencement every year. But you are the first to launch a 3-year campaign. [*Laughter*] E-mails, letters, tweets, YouTube videos. I even got three notes from the grandmother of your student body president. [*Laughter*] And I have to say that really sealed the deal. That was smart, because I have a soft spot for grandmas. [*Laughter*]

So I'm here, off Exit 9, on the banks of the Old Raritan, at the site of one of the original nine colonial colleges. Winners of the first-ever college football game. One of the newest

members of the Big Ten. Home of what I understand to be a grease truck for a Fat Sandwich. Mozzarella sticks and chicken fingers on your cheesesteaks—I'm sure Michelle would approve. [*Laughter*]

But somehow, you have survived such death-defying acts. [*Laughter*] You also survived the daily jockeying for buses, from Livingston to Busch, to Cook, to Douglass, and back again. I suspect that a few of you are trying to survive this afternoon after a late night at Olde Queens. You know who you are. [*Laughter*]

But however you got here, you made it. You made it. So today you join a long line of Scarlet Knights whose energy and intellect have lifted this university to heights its founders could not have imagined. Two hundred and fifty years ago, when America was still just an idea, a charter from the Royal Governor—Ben Franklin's son—established Queen's College. A few years later, a handful of students gathered in a converted tavern for the first class. And from that first class at a pub, Rutgers has evolved into one of the finest research institutions in America.

So this is a place where you 3–D-print prosthetic hands for children and devise rooftop wind arrays that can power entire office buildings with clean, renewable energy. Every day, tens of thousands of students come here, to this intellectual melting pot, where ideas and cultures flow together among what might just be America's most diverse student body. Here in New Brunswick, you can debate philosophy with a classmate from South Asia in one class and then strike up a conversation on the EE bus with a first-generation Latina student from Jersey City, before sitting down for your psych group project with a veteran who's going to school on the post-9/11 GI bill.

America converges here. And in so many ways, the history of Rutgers mirrors the evolution of America: the course by which we became bigger, stronger, and richer and more dynamic and a more inclusive nation.

But America's progress has never been smooth or steady. Progress doesn't travel in a straight line. It zigs and zags in fits and starts. Progress in America has been hard and contentious and sometimes bloody. It remains uneven, and at times, for every two steps forward, it feels like we take one step back.

Now, for some of you, this may sound like your college career. [*Laughter*] It sounds like mine, anyway. [*Laughter*] Which makes sense, because measured against the whole of human history, America remains a very young nation, younger, even, than this university.

But progress is bumpy. It always has been. But because of dreamers and innovators and strivers and activists, progress has been this Nation's hallmark. I'm fond of quoting Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." [*Applause*] It bends towards justice. I believe that. But I also believe that the arc of our Nation, the arc of the world, does not bend towards justice or freedom or equality or prosperity on its own. It depends on us, on the choices we make, particularly at certain inflection points in history, particularly when big changes are happening and everything seems up for grabs.

And, class of 2016, you are graduating at such an inflection point. Since the start of this new millennia, you've already witnessed horrific terrorist attacks and war and a great recession. You've seen economic and technological and cultural shifts that are profoundly altering how we work and how we communicate, how we live, how we form families. The pace of change is not subsiding; it is accelerating. And these changes offer not only great opportunity, but also great peril.

Fortunately, your generation has everything it takes to lead this country toward a brighter future. I'm confident that you can make the right choices, away from fear and division and paralysis and toward cooperation and innovation and hope. Now, partly, I'm confident because, on average, you're smarter and better educated than my generation, although we probably had better penmanship—[*laughter*]—and we're certainly better spellers. We did not have spell-check back in my day. You're not only better educated, you've been more exposed to the world, more exposed to other cultures. You're more diverse. You're

more environmentally conscious. You have a healthy skepticism for conventional wisdom.

So you've got the tools to lead us. And precisely because I have so much confidence in you, I'm not going to spend the remainder of my time telling you exactly how you're going to make the world better. You'll figure it out. [*Laughter*] You'll look at things with fresh eyes, unencumbered by the biases and blind spots and inertia and general crankiness of your parents and grandparents and old heads like me. But I do have a couple of suggestions that you may find useful as you go out there and conquer the world.

Point number one: When you hear someone longing for the "good old days," take it with a grain of salt. [*Laughter*] Take it with a grain of salt. We live in a great nation, and we are rightly proud of our history. We are beneficiaries of the labor and the grit and the courage of generations who came before. But I guess it's part of human nature, especially in times of change and uncertainty, to want to look backwards and long for some imaginary past when everything worked and the economy hummed and all politicians were wise and every child was well mannered and America pretty much did whatever it wanted around the world.

Guess what? It ain't so. [*Laughter*] The "good old days" weren't all that good. Yes, there have been some stretches in our history where the economy grew much faster or when government ran more smoothly. There were moments when, immediately after World War II, for example or at the end of the cold war, when the world bent more easily to our will. But those are sporadic, those moments, those episodes. In fact, by almost every measure, America is better—and the world is better—than it was 50 years ago or 30 years ago or even 8 years ago.

And by the way, I'm not—set aside 150 years ago, pre–Civil War, right? There's a whole bunch of stuff there we could talk about. Set aside life in the fifties, when women and people of color were systematically excluded from big chunks of American life. Since I graduated, in 1983—which isn't that long ago—[*laughter*]—I'm just saying. Since I graduated, crime rates, teenage pregnancy, the share of Americans living in poverty—they're all down. The share of Americans with college educations have gone way up. Our life expectancy has, as well. Blacks and Latinos have risen up the ranks in business and politics. More women are in the workforce. They're earning more money, although it's long past time that we passed laws to make sure that women are getting the same pay for the same work as men.

Meanwhile, in the 8 years since most of you started high school, we're also better off. You and your fellow graduates are entering the job market with better prospects than any time since 2007. Twenty million more Americans know the financial security of health insurance. We're less dependent on foreign oil. We've doubled the production of clean energy. We have cut the high school dropout rate. We've cut the deficit by two-thirds. Marriage equality is the law of the land.

And just as America is better, the world is better than when I graduated. Since I graduated, an Iron Curtain fell, apartheid ended. There's more democracy. We virtually eliminated certain diseases like polio. We've cut extreme poverty drastically. We've cut infant mortality by an enormous amount.

Now, I say all these things not to make you complacent. We've got a bunch of big problems to solve. But I say it to point out that change has been a constant in our history. And the reason America is better is because we didn't look backwards; we didn't fear the future. We seized the future and made it our own. And that's exactly why it's always been young people like you that have brought about big change, because you don't fear the future.

And that leads me to my second point: The world is more interconnected than ever before, and it's becoming more connected every day. Building walls won't change that.

Look, as President, my first responsibility is always the security and prosperity of the United States. And as citizens, we all rightly put our country first. But if the past two decades have taught us anything, it's that the biggest challenges we face cannot be solved in isolation. When overseas states start falling apart, they

become breeding grounds for terrorists and ideologies of nihilism and despair that ultimately can reach our shores. When developing countries don't have functioning health systems, epidemics like Zika or Ebola can spread and threaten Americans too. And a wall won't stop that.

If we want to close loopholes that allow large corporations and wealthy individuals to avoid paying their fair share of taxes, we've got to have the cooperation of other countries in a global financial system to help enforce financial laws. The point is, to help ourselves, we've got to help others, not pull up the drawbridge and try to keep the world out.

And engagement does not just mean deploying our military. There are times where we must take military action to protect ourselves and our allies, and we are in awe of and we are grateful for the men and women who make up the finest fighting force the world has ever known. But I worry if we think that the entire burden of our engagement with the world is up to the 1 percent who serve in our military and the rest of us can just sit back and do nothing. They can't shoulder the entire burden. Engagement means using all the levers of our national power and rallying the world to take on our shared challenges.

You look at something like trade, for example. We live in an age of global supply chains and cargo ships that crisscross oceans and online commerce that can render borders obsolete. And a lot of folks have legitimate concerns with the way globalization has progressed. That's one of the changes that's been taking place: jobs shipped overseas, trade deals that sometimes put workers and businesses at a disadvantage. But the answer isn't to stop trading with other countries. In this global economy, that's not even possible. The answer is to do trade the right way, by negotiating with other countries so that they raise their labor standards and their environmental standards; and we make sure they don't impose unfair tariffs on American goods or steal American intellectual property. That's how we make sure that international rules are consistent with our values, including human rights. And ultimately, that's how we help raise wages here in America. That's how we help our workers compete on a level playing field.

Building walls won't do that. It won't boost our economy, and it won't enhance our security either. Isolating or disparaging Muslims, suggesting that they should be treated differently when it comes to entering this country, that is not just a betrayal of our values—[*applause*]—that's not just a betrayal of who we are, it would alienate the very communities at home and abroad who are our most important partners in the fight against violent extremism. Suggesting that we can build an endless wall along our borders and blame our challenges on immigrants, that doesn't just run counter to our history as the world's melting pot, it contradicts the evidence that our growth and our innovation and our dynamism has always been spurred by our ability to attract strivers from every corner of the globe. That's how we became America. Why would we want to stop it now?

Audience member. Four more years!

The President. Can't do it. [*Laughter*]

Which brings me to my third point: Facts, evidence, reason, logic, an understanding of science—these are good things. These are qualities you want in people making policy. These are qualities you want to continue to cultivate in yourselves as citizens. That might seem obvious. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Preach, preach!

The President. That's why we honor Bill Moyers or Dr. Burnell. I—we traditionally have valued those things. But if you were listening to today's political debate, you might wonder where this strain of anti-intellectualism came from. So, class of 2016, let me be as clear as I can be. In politics and in life, ignorance is not a virtue. It's not cool to not know what you're talking about. [*Laughter*] That's not keeping it real or telling it like it is. [*Laughter*] That's not challenging political correctness. [*Laughter*] That's just not knowing what you're talking about. [*Laughter*] And yet we've become confused about this.

Look, our Nation's Founders—Franklin, Madison, Hamilton, Jefferson—they were

born of the Enlightenment. They sought to escape superstition and sectarianism and tribalism and know-nothingness. [*Laughter*] They believed in rational thought and experimentation and the capacity of informed citizens to master our own fates. That is embedded in our constitutional design. That spirit informed our inventors and our explorers, the Edisons and the Wright brothers and the George Washington Carvers and the Grace Hoppers and the Norman Borlaugs and the Steve Jobses. That's what built this country.

And today, in every phone in one of your pockets—[*laughter*]—we have access to more information than at any time in human history, at a touch of a button. But ironically, the flood of information hasn't made us more discerning of the truth. In some ways, it's just made us more confident in our ignorance. [*Laughter*] We assume whatever is on the web must be true. We search for sites that just reinforce our own predispositions. Opinions masquerade as facts. The wildest conspiracy theories are taken for gospel.

Now, understand, I am sure you've learned during your years of college—and if not, you will learn soon—that there are a whole lot of folks who are book smart and have no common sense. [*Laughter*] That's the truth. You'll meet them if you haven't already. [*Laughter*] So the fact that they've got a fancy degree—you've got to talk to them to see whether they know what they're talking about. [*Laughter*] Qualities like kindness and compassion, honesty, hard work—they often matter more than technical skills or know-how.

But when our leaders express a disdain for facts, when they're not held accountable for repeating falsehoods and just making stuff up, while actual experts are dismissed as elitists, then we've got a problem.

You know, it's interesting that if we get sick, we actually want to make sure the doctor has, like, gone to medical school, they know what they're talking about. If we get on a plane, we say we really want a pilot to be able to pilot the plane. [*Laughter*] And yet, in our public lives, we suddenly think, "I don't want somebody who's done it before." [*Laughter*] Look, the rejection of facts, the rejection of reason and science, that is the path to decline. It calls to mind the words of Carl Sagan, who graduated high school here in New Jersey. He said, "We can judge our progress by the courage of our questions and the depths of our answers, our willingness to embrace what is true rather than what feels good."

The debate around climate change is a perfect example of this. Now, I recognize it doesn't feel like the planet is warmer right now. [*Laughter*] I understand. There was hail when I landed in Newark. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, the President looked upward and gestured as a gust of wind blew, and audience members laughed in response.*]

The President. But think about the climate change issue. Every day, there are officials in high office with responsibilities who mock the overwhelming consensus of the world's scientists that human activities and the release of carbon dioxide and methane and other substances are altering our climate in profound and dangerous ways.

A while back, you may have seen a United States Senator trotted out a snowball during a floor speech in the middle of winter as "proof" that the world was not warming. [*Laughter*] I mean, listen, climate change is not something subject to political spin. There is evidence. There are facts. We can see it happening right now. If we don't act, if we don't roll—if we don't follow through on the progress we made in Paris, the progress we've been making here at home, your generation will feel the brunt of this catastrophe.

So it's up to you to insist upon and shape an informed debate. Imagine if Benjamin Franklin had seen that Senator with the snowball, what he would think. Imagine if your fifth grade science teacher had seen that. [*Laughter*] He'd get a D. [*Laughter*] And he's a Senator, somebody—[*laughter*].

Look, I'm not suggesting that cold analysis and hard data are ultimately more important in life than passion or faith or love or loyalty. I am suggesting that those highest expressions of our humanity can only flourish when our econ-

omy functions well and proposed budgets add up and our environment is protected. And to accomplish those things, to make collective decisions on behalf of a common good, we have to use our heads. We have to agree that facts and evidence matter. And we've got to hold our leaders and ourselves accountable to know what the heck they're talking about.

All right. I only have two more points. I know it's getting cold and you guys have to graduate. [*Laughter*] Point four: Have faith in democracy. Look, I know it's not always pretty. Really, I know. [*Laughter*] I've been living it. But it's how, bit by bit, generation by generation, we have made progress in this Nation. That's how we banned child labor. That's how we cleaned up our air and our water. That's how we passed programs like Social Security and Medicare that lifted millions of seniors out of poverty.

None of these changes happened overnight. They didn't happen because some charismatic leader got everybody suddenly to agree on everything. It didn't happen because of some massive political revolution occurred. It actually happened over the course of years of advocacy and organizing and alliance building and deal making and the changing of public opinion. It happened because ordinary Americans who cared participated in the political process. So——

Audience member. It happened because of you!

The President. [*Laughter*] Well, that's nice. I mean, I helped, but—[*laughter*].

Look, if you want to change this country for the better, you've got to—you'd better start participating. I'll give you an example on a lot of people's minds right now, and that's the growing inequality in our economy. Over much of the last century, we've unleashed the strongest economic engine the world has ever seen, but over the past few decades, our economy has become more and more unequal. The top 10 percent of earners now take in half of all income in the U.S. In the past, it used to be a top CEO made 20 or 30 times the income of the average worker. Today, it's 300 times more. And wages aren't rising fast enough for millions of hard-working families.

Now, if we want to reverse those trends, there are a bunch of policies that would make a real difference. We could raise the minimum wage. We could modernize our infrastructure. We could invest in early childhood education. We could make college more affordable. We could close tax loopholes on hedge fund managers and take that money and give tax breaks to help families with childcare or retirement. And if we do—if we did these things, then we'd help to restore the sense that hard work is rewarded, and we could build an economy that truly works for everybody.

Now, the reason some of these things have not happened, even though the majority of people approve them, is really simple. It's not because I wasn't proposing them. It wasn't because the facts and the evidence showed they wouldn't work. It was because a huge chunk of Americans, especially young people, do not vote.

In 2014, voter turnout was the lowest since World War II. Fewer than one in five young people showed up to vote—2014. And the four who stayed home determined the course of this country just as much as the single one who voted, because apathy has consequences. It determines who our Congress is. It determines what policies they prioritize. It even, for example, determines whether a really highly qualified Supreme Court nominee receives the courtesy of a hearing and a vote in the United States Senate.

And yes, big money is—big money in politics is a huge problem. We've got to reduce its influence. Yes, special interests and lobbyists have disproportionate access to the corridors of power. But, contrary to what we hear sometimes from both the left as well as the right, the system isn't as rigged as you think, and it certainly is not as hopeless as you think. Politicians care about being elected, and they especially care about being reelected. And if you vote and you elect a majority that represents your views, you will get what you want. And if you opt out, or stop paying attention, you won't. It's that simple. It's not that complicated.

Now, one of the reasons that people don't vote is because they don't see the changes they were looking for right away. Well, guess what: None of the great strides in our history happened right away. It took Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP decades to win *Brown* v. *Board of Education* and then another decade after that to secure the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. And it took a—it took more time after that for it to start working. It took a proud daughter of New Jersey, Alice Paul, years of organizing marches and hunger strikes and protests and drafting hundreds of pieces of legislation and writing letters and giving speeches and working with congressional leaders before she and other suffragists finally helped win women the right to vote.

Each stage along the way required compromise. Sometimes, you took half a loaf. You forged allies. Sometimes, you lost on an issue, and then you came back to fight another day. That's how democracy works. So you've got to be committed to participating not just if you get immediate gratification, but you got to be a citizen full time, all the time.

And if participation means voting, and it means compromise, and organizing and advocacy, it also means listening to those who don't agree with you. I know a couple years ago, folks—some folks on this campus got upset that Condoleezza Rice was supposed to speak at a commencement. Now, I don't think it's a secret that I disagree with many of the foreign policies of Dr. Rice and the previous administration. But the notion that this community or the country would be better served by not hearing from a former Secretary of State or shutting out what she had to say, I believe that's misguided. I don't think that's how democracy works best, when we're not even willing to listen to each other. I believe that's misguided.

If you disagree with somebody, bring them in and ask them tough questions. Hold their feet to the fire. Make them defend their positions. If somebody has got a bad or offensive idea, prove it wrong. Engage it. Debate it. Stand up for what you believe in. Don't be scared to take somebody on. Don't feel like you've got to shut your ears off because you're too fragile and somebody might offend your sensibilities. Go at them if they're not making any sense. Use your logic and reason and words. And by doing so, you'll strengthen your own position, and you'll hone your arguments. And maybe you'll learn something and realize you don't know everything. And you may have a new understanding not only about what your opponents believe, but maybe what you believe. Either way, you win. And more importantly, our democracy wins.

So, anyway, I know—all right. That's it, class of 2016—[*laughter*]—a few suggestions on how you can change the world. Except, maybe I've got one last suggestion. And that—just one. And that is, gear yourself for the long haul. Whatever path you choose—business, nonprofits, government, education, health care, the arts—whatever it is, you're going to have some setbacks. You will deal occasionally with foolish people. [*Laughter*] You will be frustrated. You'll have a boss that's not great. [*Laughter*] You won't always get everything you want, at least not as fast as you want it. So you have to stick with it. You have to be persistent. And success, however small, however incomplete, success is still success. It's—I always tell my daughters, you know, better is good. It may not be great—perfect, it may not be great, but it's good. That's how progress happens, in societies and in our own lives.

So don't lose hope if sometimes you hit a roadblock. Don't lose hope in the face of naysayers. And certainly, don't let resistance make you cynical. Cynicism is so easy, and cynics don't accomplish much. As a friend of mine who happens to be from New Jersey, a guy named Bruce Springsteen, once sang, "They spend their lives waiting for a moment that just don't come." Don't let that be you. Don't waste your time waiting.

And, if you doubt you can make a difference, look at the impact some of your fellow graduates are already making. Look at what Matthew has been doing. Look at somebody like Yasmin Ramadan, who began organizing antibullying assemblies when she was 10 years old to help kids handle bias and discrimination,

and here at Rutgers, helped found the Muslim Public Relations Council to work with administrators and police to promote inclusion.

Look at somebody like Madison Little, who grew up dealing with some health issues, and started wondering what his care would have been like if he lived someplace else, and so, here at Rutgers, he took charge of a student nonprofit and worked with folks in Australia and Cambodia and Uganda to address the AIDS epidemic. "Our generation has so much energy to adapt and impact the world," he said. "My peers give me a lot of hope that we'll overcome the obstacles we face in society."

That's you! Is it any wonder that I am optimistic? Throughout our history, a new generation of Americans has reached up and bent the arc of history in the direction of more freedom and more opportunity and more justice. And, class of 2016, it is your turn now to shape our Nation's destiny, as well as your own.

So get to work. Make sure the next 250 years are better than the last.

Good luck. God bless you. God bless this country we love. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:04 p.m. at the High Point Solutions Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Matthew R. Panconi, student assembly president, and Greg Brown, chairman of the board of governors, Rutgers University; Mayor James Cahill of New Brunswick, NJ; Dianne Totten, grandmother of Mr. Panconi; Sen. James M. Inhofe; and Supreme Court Associate Justice-designate Merrick B. Garland.

Remarks on Presenting the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor
May 16, 2016

Thank you, and good morning. Welcome to the White House. Thank you, Attorney General Lynch, for your words and your leadership. We've got a couple of Members of Congress here: Frederica Wilson and Chris Collins we want to acknowledge. And I also want to recognize Director Comey, members of the Fraternal Order of Police, and all the outstanding law enforcement officials who are here from around the country. I'm proud to stand with you as we celebrate Police Week. And most of all, I'm proud to be with the heroes on the front row and with the families who have supported them and the family of one who made the ultimate sacrifice.

It's been said that perfect valor is doing without witnesses what you would do if the whole world were watching. The public safety officers we recognize today with the Medal of Valor found courage not in search of recognition, they did it instinctively. This is an award that none of them sought. And if they could go back in time, I suspect they'd prefer none of this had happened.

As one of today's honorees said about his actions, "I could have very well gone my whole career and not dealt with this situation and been very happy with that." If they had their way, none of them would have to be here, and so we're grateful that they are, and our entire Nation expresses its profound gratitude. More important, we're so grateful that they were there: some on duty, others off duty, all rising above and beyond the call of duty. All saving the lives of people they didn't know.

That distinction—that these 13 officers of valor saved the lives of strangers—is the first of several qualities that they share. But their bravery—if it had not been for their bravery, we likely would have lost a lot of people: mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, friends and loved ones. Thankfully, they are still with their families today because these officers were where they needed to be most at a critical time: at a gas station during a routine patrol, in the middle of a busy hospital, in a grocery store, on the campus of a community college, near an elementary school where a sheriff's deputy's own children were students and his wife taught. In all of these places, in each of these moments, these officers were true to their oaths.

To a person, each of these honorees acted without regard for their own safety. They stood up to dangerous individuals brandishing assault

rifles, handguns, and knives. One officer sustained multiple stab wounds while fighting off an assailant. Another endured first-degree burns to his arms and face while pulling an unconscious driver from a burning car on a freeway.

Each of them will tell you, very humbly, the same thing: They were just doing their jobs. They were doing what they had to do, what they were trained to do, like on any other day. The officer who suffered those terrible burns, he left urgent care and went straight to work. He had to finish his shift. And that sense of duty and purpose is what these Americans embody.

And the truth is, it's because of your courage—sometimes seen, but sometimes unseen—that the rest of us can go about living our lives like it's any other day: going to work, going to school, spending time with our families, getting home safely. We so appreciate our public safety officers around the country, from our rookie cadets to our role model of an Attorney General. Not everyone will wear the medal that we give today, but every day, so many of our public safety officers wear a badge of honor.

The men and women who run toward danger remind us with your courage and humility what the highest form of citizenship looks like. When you see students and commuters and shoppers at risk, you don't see these civilians as strangers. You see them as part of your own family, your own community. As Scripture teaches us, you love your neighbor as yourself, and you put others' safety before your own. In your proud example of public service, you remind us that loving our country means loving one another.

Today we also want to acknowledge the profound sacrifices made by your families. And I had the chance to meet some of them and they were all clearly so proud of you, but we're very proud of them. We know that you wait up late and you're worried and you're counting down the minutes until your loved one walks through the door, safe, after a long shift. We know it never gets easier, and we thank you for that. And of course, we honor those who didn't come home, including one hero we honor posthumously today: Sergeant Robert Wilson III.

He gave his life when two men opened fire at a video game store where Sergeant Wilson was buying a son a birthday present. To his family who's here—his grandmother Constance, his brother and sister—please know how deeply sorry we are for your loss, how grateful we are for Sergeant Wilson's service.

We also honor the more than 35 who have given their lives in the line of duty so far this year. One of them, an officer in Virginia named Ashley Marie Guindon, was taken from us on her very first shift.

I've seen this sacrifice when I've joined some of you at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial not far from here. We read the names carved on these walls, and we grieve with the families who carry the fallen in their hearts forever. We've been moved deeply by their anguish, but also by their pride in the lives their loved ones lived. And in those moments, we're reminded of our enduring obligation as citizens that they sacrificed so much for: that we do right by them and their families.

And medals and ceremonies like today are important, but these aren't enough to convey the true depth of our gratitude. Our words will be hollow if they're not matched by deeds. So our Nation has a responsibility to support those who serve and protect us and keep our streets safe. We can show our respect by listening to you and learning from you, giving you the resources that you need to do the jobs. That's the mission of our police Task Force, which brought together local law enforcement, civil rights and faith leaders, and community members to open dialogue and build trust and find concrete solutions that make your jobs safer. Our country needs that right now.

We're going to keep pushing Congress to move forward [in]* a bipartisan way to make our criminal justice system fairer and smarter and more cost-effective and enhance public safety and ensure the men and women in this

* White House correction.

room have the ability to enforce the law and keep their communities safe.

A few minutes ago, I signed into law a package of bills to protect and honor our law enforcement officers, including one that will help State and local departments buy more bulletproof vests.

Emerson once said, "There is always safety in valor." The public safety officers we honor today give those words new meaning, for it's your courage and quick thinking that gave us our safety.

So we want to thank you for your service. And we want to thank your families for your sacrifice. I had a chance before I came out here to meet with the recipients, and I told them that, although this particular moment for which you are being honored is remarkable, we also know that every day you go out there, you've got a tough job. And we could not be prouder of not only moments like the ones we recognize here today, but just the day-to-day grind: you doing your jobs professionally, you doing your jobs with character. We want you to know we could not be prouder of you, and we couldn't be prouder of your families for all the contributions that you make.

So may God bless you and your families. May God bless our fallen heroes. May God bless the United States of America.

And it's now my honor to award these medals as the citations are read.

[*At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Richard I. Lawlor, USN, Navy Aide to the President, read the citations and the President presented the medals, assisted by Cmdr. Jillian C. Malzone, USCG, Coast Guard Aide to the President.*]

Let's give one last big round of applause to the recipients of the Medal of Valor.

Thank you all. Thank you for your dedication. Thanks for your service. You are continuously in our thoughts and prayers, and we are continuously giving thanks for all that you and your families do.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Capt. Raymond Bottenfield, Santa Monica, CA, Police Department; Deputy Joseph L. Tortorella, Niagara County, NY, Sheriff's Office, his wife Erica, and their children Samuel and Lilliana; Officer Mario Gutierrez, Miami-Dade, FL, Police Department; Officer Donald Thompson, Los Angeles, CA, Police Department; Carlton Hipps and Ramone Williams, who were charged in the killing of Sgt. Robert Wilson III at the GameStop in Philadelphia, PA, on March 5, 2015; Constance Wilson, grandmother of the late Sgt. Wilson; and Officer Ashley M. Guindon, Prince William County, VA, Police Department, who was killed in the line of duty in Woodbridge, VA, on February 27. He also referred to S. 125, the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program Reauthorization Act of 2015, which was approved May 16 and assigned Public Law No. 114–155; and S. 2755, the Fallen Heroes Flag Act of 2016, which was approved May 16 and assigned Public Law No. 114–156. Also participating in the ceremony were Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor recipients Patrolman Lewis Ciochi, Johnson City, NY, Police Department; Ofc. Jason Salas, Ofc. Robert Sparks, and Maj. David Huff, Midwest City, OK, Police Department; Ofc. Coral Walker, Omaha, NE, Police Department; Ofc. Gregory Stevens, Garland, TX, Police Department; Ofc. Niel Johnson, North Miami, FL, Police Department; and Special Agent Tyler Call, Federal Bureau of Investigation. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the reading of the citations.

Statement on the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia
May 17, 2016

On May 17, Americans and people around the world mark the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia by reaffirming the dignity and inherent worth of all people, regardless of who they love or their gender identity.

Our Nation is committed to the principle that all people should be treated fairly and with respect. Advancing this goal has long been a cornerstone of American diplomacy, and I am proud that my administration has made advancing the human rights of LGBT individuals a specific focus of our engagement around the world. I am also proud of the great strides that our Nation has made at home in recent years, including that we now have marriage equality as a result of last year's landmark Supreme Court decision.

At the same time, there is much work to be done to combat homophobia and transphobia, both at home and abroad. In too many places, LGBT individuals grow up forced to conceal or deny who they truly are for fear of persecution, discrimination, and violence. All nations and all communities can and must do better. Fortunately, human rights champions and good citizens around the world continue to strive towards this goal every day by lifting up the simple truth that LGBT rights are human rights. The United States honors their work and will continue to support them in their struggle for human dignity.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Burma
May 17, 2016

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to Burma that was declared on May 20, 1997, is to continue in effect beyond May 20, 2016.

The Government of Burma has made significant progress across a number of important areas since 2011, including the release of over 1,300 political prisoners, a peaceful and competitive election, the signing of a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement with eight ethnic armed groups, the discharge of hundreds of child soldiers from the military, steps to improve labor standards, and expanding political space for civil society to have a greater voice in shaping issues critical to Burma's future. In addition, Burma has become a signatory of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Additional Protocol and ratified the Biological Weapons Convention, significant steps towards supporting global non-proliferation. Despite these strides, the situation in the country continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.

Concerns persist regarding continued obstacles to full civilian control of the government, the ongoing conflict and human rights abuses in the country, particularly in ethnic minority areas, and military trade with North Korea. In addition, Burma's security forces, operating with little oversight from the civilian government, often act with impunity. We are further concerned that prisoners remain detained and that police continue to arrest critics of the government for peacefully expressing their views. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Burma.

Despite this action, the United States remains committed to working with both the new government and the people of Burma to ensure that the democratic transition is irreversible.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 17, 2016.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Stabilization of Iraq
May 18, 2016

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq that was declared in Executive Order 13303 of May 22, 2003, is to continue in effect beyond May 22, 2016.

Obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Accordingly, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 18, 2016.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Presenting the National Medal of Science and the National Medal of Technology and Innovation
May 19, 2016

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Welcome to the White House. Today I have the privilege to present our Nation's highest honor for scientific and technological achievement: the National Medals of Science and the National Medals of Technology and Innovation.

The amount of brainpower in this room right now is astonishing. [*Laughter*] But when you talk to these brilliant men and women, it's clear the honor has not yet gone to their heads. They still put their lab coats [on]* one arm at a time. [*Laughter*]

Joining us to celebrate these achievements are Members of Congress; Secretary of Energy Ernie Moniz, a pretty good scientist himself; my science adviser, John Holdren; the Director of the National Science Foundation, France Còrdova; the Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, Michelle Lee; and Jim Rathmann from the National Medals of Science and Technology Foundation. I want to thank them for all the work that they do each year to help us organize and honor the scientists and innovators in this great nation of ours.

Now, we are engaging in a lot of science and tinkering here at the White House. [*Laughter*] We've got Astronomy Night. We've got Hack-a-thons. We've got Code-a-thons. We have Science Fairs, Maker Faires. It is fun. I love this stuff. I get to test out some of the cool stuff that ends up here in the White House. At this year's Science Fair, one ninth—9-year-old, named Jacob Leggette, turned the tables on me and suggested that we needed to start a kids' advisory group—[*laughter*]—so that young people can help us understand what's interesting to them when it comes to STEM

* White House correction.

education, which I thought was a pretty good idea. [*Laughter*]

So today I can announce that we are launching a "Kid Science Advisers" campaign for young scientists and innovators to send in their suggestions for what we should be doing to support science and technology and inspire the next generation of scientists and innovators. So those young people out there who are listening, go to our website. We're going to be looking for some advisers, some advice. [*Laughter*]

The real reason we do this, as I've said before, is to teach our young people that it's not just the winner of the Super Bowl or the NCAA tournament that deserves a celebration; that we want the winners of science fairs, we want those who have invented the products and lifesaving medicines and are engineering our future to be celebrated as well. Because immersing young people in science, math, engineering, that's what's going to carry the American spirit of innovation through the 21st century and beyond.

That's what the honorees who are here today represent. Many of them came from humble or ordinary beginnings, but along the way, someone or something sparked their curiosity. Someone brought them their first computer. Someone introduced them to a lab. A child in their lives needed specialized medical help. And because they lived in an America that fosters curiosity and invests in education and values science as important to our progress, they were able to find their calling and do extraordinary things. So there are few better examples for our young people to follow than the Americans that we honor today.

Just to take a couple of examples: Shirley Ann Jackson, who is part of my science advisory group, grew up right here in Washington, DC. Hers was a quiet childhood. Her first homemade experiment involved, I understand, collecting and cataloging bumblebees in her backyard. [*Laughter*] Two events happened that would not only change our country's course, but Shirley's: In *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, the Supreme Court handed down a landmark decision that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal; and the Soviets launched *Sputnik* up in the sky, sparking a space race. As Shirley put it, "Those two events in history changed my life for good."

She went on to become the first African American to earn a doctorate in physics from MIT, the second woman to do so anywhere in America. And over the years, Dr. Jackson has revolutionized the way science informs public policy from rethinking safety at our nuclear plants to training a new generation of scientists and engineers that looks more like the diverse and inclusive America that she loves.

Then you have Mark Humayan, who immigrated to the United States with his family when he was 9 years old. When his diabetic grandmother lost her vision, he began studying to become an ophthalmologist, hoping he could save the sight of others. Mark helped create the "Argus II," a "bionic eye" that has restored vision to patients who've been blind for up to 50 years. He says the moment when he witnessed someone seeing light and shapes, someone experiencing the miracle of sight for the first time in decades—those moments have been some of the happiest and most rewarding of his professional career. In his words—and I think no pun is intended—"There wasn't a dry eye in the operating room." [*Laughter*]

Growing up in Chicago, Mary-Claire King's dad would sit with her in front of the TV for Cubs and White Sox games—[*laughter*]—and make up story problems for her to solve about the players on the field. She just thought that's how everyone watched baseball, which explains why, when a college adviser encouraged her to take a genetics course, she said, "I couldn't believe anything could be so fun." [*Laughter*]

But every single American should be grateful for Mary-Claire King's path. We're glad that she thought it was fun, because at a time when most scientists believed that cancer was caused by viruses, she relentlessly pursued her hunch that certain cancers were linked to inherited genetic mutations. This self-described "stubborn" scientist kept going until she proved herself right. Seventeen years of work later, Mary-Claire discovered a single gene that predisposes women to breast cancer. And that discovery has empowered women and

their doctors with science to better understand the choices that they make when it comes to their health and their future.

So these are just three examples of the remarkable stories that are represented here today. They illustrate why this is such an extraordinary moment to be a scientist in this country. America's progress in science and technology has countless revolutionary discoveries within our reach: new materials designed atom by atom, new forms of clean energy, new breakthroughs in treating cancer and ending the wait for organ transplants; private space flight, a planned human mission to Mars, a NASA probe that broke free from the solar system 3 years ago, and it just kept on going. That's some of what America can do.

That's why we're constantly pushing Congress to fund the work of our scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs and dreamers to keep America on the cutting edge.

As President, I'm proud to honor each of you for your contributions to our nations. As an American, I'm proud of everything that you've done to contribute to that fearless spirit of innovation that's made us who we are and that doesn't just benefit our citizens, but benefits the world. We're very proud of what you've done. So congratulations to all of you.

With that, let's read the citations and present the awards.

[*At this point, Lt. Col. Andrew C. Steadman, USA, Army Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals, assisted by Maj. Steven M. Schreiber, USMC, Marine Corps Aide to the President.*]

Let's give another big round of applause to our honorees. [*Applause*] Yay! Very proud of them.

And let's give a big round of applause to my Military Aide, who had to read those citations—[*laughter*]—with a lot of pretty complicated phrases in them. You were practicing, weren't you? [*Laughter*] The—well, it just goes to show we can all learn science. [*Laughter*] Science rocks.

So thank you very much, everybody. Please enjoy the reception. Congratulations to our honorees. Have a wonderful afternoon. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:44 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to James L. Rathmann, Chairman, National Science and Technology Medals Foundation; Jacob Leggette, student, Digital Harbor Foundation's Mini Makers program in Baltimore, MD; Shirley A. Jackson, president, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; Mark Humayun, Cornelius J. Pings Chair in Biomedical Sciences, University of Southern California; and Mary-Claire King, professor of genome sciences and medicine, University of Washington. Also participating in the ceremony were National Medal of Science recipients Armand P. Alivisatos, Michael Artin, Albert Bandura, Stanley Falkow, Rakesh K. Jain, Simon Levin, Geraldine Richmond; and National Medal of Technology and Innovation recipients Joseph DeSimone, Robert Fischell, Arthur Gossard, Nancy Ho, Chenming Hu, Cato T. Laurencin, and Jonathan Rothberg. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the reading of the medal citations.

Remarks Following a Meeting on Zika Virus Preparedness Efforts
May 20, 2016

Well, I just had an opportunity to get a full briefing from Secretary Burwell, CDC Director Frieden, as well as Tony Fauci from NIH about the Zika situation, and I wanted to give the American people a quick update on where we are.

As has been explained repeatedly, but I want to reemphasize, Zika is not like Ebola. This is not a human-to-human transmission, with the one exception that we'll talk about. It's primarily transmitted through mosquitoes, a very particular type of mosquito. But what we

do know is that if you contract Zika, even if you don't appear to have significant symptoms, it is possible for Zika to cause significant birth defects, including microcephaly, where the skull casing is—the head of the infant, is significantly smaller. We think that there may be other neurological disorders that are caused as a consequence of Zika, and we don't know all of the potential effects. We do know that they are serious.

Right now what we've seen is a little over 500 cases of Zika in the continental United States, and they all appear to be travel related, not mosquito transmitted, meaning somebody from the U.S. went down to an area that has Zika, got a bite, came back. We have seen at least 10 cases in which a individual went to one of these areas, got infected, and then sexually transmitted Zika to their partner.

A more significant, immediate concern is Puerto Rico, where we know that there are over 800 cases that have been diagnosed. However, we suspect that it could be significantly higher. The reason is, is that for most people, you may not have a lot of symptoms when you get Zika. If you are not pregnant or the partner of somebody who is pregnant or trying to get pregnant, then you may not even know that you end up having Zika. And that means that people oftentimes are not affirmatively going to the doctor and getting tested on these issues.

Now, here's the good news, is that because of the good work that's been done by the Department of Health and Human Services, by the CDC, as well as NIH, we have put forward a plan; we've got a plan over the next several months to begin developing a vaccine and to continually improve our diagnostic tests. We're also working with all the States so that they're properly prepared if we start seeing an outbreak here in the continental United States during the summer when obviously mosquitoes are more active.

And what we're also trying to do is to develop new tools for vector control, meaning how do we kill mosquitoes and reduce their populations, particularly this kind of mosquito. That's a tricky piece of business because we've been using a lot of insecticides for a long time that have become less and less effective. New strains of mosquitoes become resistant to the insecticides that we have. The methods we use aren't as effective as they used to be. And so we're also investing a lot of time, research, logistical support to States and local communities to start improving our ability to control mosquitoes.

Puerto Rico is most urgent and some of the Territories, but we're also spending time working with the States so that they can be better prepared.

All of this work costs money. And we have put forward a package that costs $1.9 billion in emergency funding in order for us to make sure that we are doing effective mosquito control, to make sure that we are developing effective diagnostic tools and distributing them, to make sure that we are developing the vaccines that ultimately will prevent some of the tragedies that we've seen for those who have contracted Zika and then end up having children with significant birth defects.

And we didn't just choose the $1.9 billion from the top of our heads. This was based on public health assessments of all the work that needs to be done. And to the extent that we want to be able to feel safe and secure and families who are of childbearing years want to feel as if they can have confidence that when they travel, when they want to start a family, that this is not an issue—to the extent that that's something that we think is important—then this is a pretty modest investment for us to get those assurances.

Unfortunately, what we have right now is the Senate approving a package that would fund a little over half of what's been requested. The House so far has approved about a third of the money that's been requested, except that money is taken from the fund that we're currently using to continue to monitor and fight against Ebola. So, effectively, there's no new money there; all that the House has done is said, you can rob Peter to pay Paul. And given that I have, at least, pretty vivid memories of how concerned people were about Ebola, the notion that we would stop monitoring as effec-

tively and dealing with Ebola in order to deal with Zika doesn't make a lot of sense. And I don't think it will make a lot of sense to the American people.

So here's the upshot. This is something that is solvable. It is not something that we have to panic about, but it is something we have to take seriously. And if we make a modest investment on the front end, then this is going to be a problem that we don't have to deal with on the back end.

Every child that has something like microcephaly, that may end up costing up to $10 million over the lifetime of that child in terms of that family providing that child the support that they need. That sets aside the pain and the sorrow and the challenges that they're going to go through. Add that up. It doesn't take a lot of cases for you to get to $1.9 billion. Why wouldn't we want to make that investment now?

So my hope was that we would have had a bill that I could sign now, because part of what we're trying to do is to accelerate, get the process going for vaccines. You don't get a vaccine overnight. Initially, you have to test it to make sure that any potential vaccine is safe. Then, you have to test to make sure that it's effective. You have to try—conduct trials where you're testing it on a large-enough bunch of people that you can make scientific determinations that it's effective.

So we've got to get moving. And what essentially NIH and CDC have been doing is taking pots of money from other things—universal flu funds or Ebola funds or other funds—just to get the thing rolling. But we have to reimburse those pots of money that have already been depleted, and we have to be able to sustain the work that's going to need to be done to finish the job.

So bottom line is, Congress needs to get me a bill. It needs to get me a bill that has sufficient funds to do the job. They should not be going off on recess before this is done. And certainly, this has to get done over the course of the next several weeks in order for us to be able to provide confidence to the American people that we're handling this piece of business.

If I'm a young family right now or somebody who's thinking about starting a family, this is just a piece of insurance that I want to purchase. And I think that's true for most Americans. So—and understand that this is not something where we can build a wall to prevent. Mosquitoes don't go through Customs. To the extent that we're not handling this thing on the front end, we're going to have bigger problems on the back end.

So for those of you who are listening, tell your Members of Congress, get on the job on this. This is something we can handle. We should have confidence in our ability to take care of it. We've got outstanding scientists and researchers who are in the process of getting this done, but they've got to have the support from the public in order for us to accomplish our goal.

Okay. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:04 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Anthony S. Fauci, Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Also participating in the meeting were Vice President Joe Biden; Shaun L.S. Donovan, Director, Office of Management and Budget; and Deputy Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Amy Pope.

Statement on the Observance of Vesak
May 20, 2016

Michelle and I extend our warmest wishes to Buddhists in the United States and around the world in their celebration of Vesak, a day honoring the birth, enlightenment, and passing of Buddha. During this season, we reflect on Buddha's universal teachings of peace, service, and recognition of common humanity—shared values that also bind us all as Americans. This

occasion gives us an opportunity to commemorate the many contributions of Buddhists to our progress and to recommit ourselves to building a brighter future for all communities, cultures, and religions. As we come together in hope for wisdom, courage, and compassion, our family sends our best wishes during this season.

Statement on Representative K. Mark Takai's Decision Not To Seek Reelection
May 20, 2016

For more than 20 years, Representative Mark Takai has proudly served the people of Hawaii. As a long-time Lieutenant Colonel in the Hawaii Army National Guard, as a champion for our brave men and women in uniform and our veterans, and as someone who stands up for our working families, he's always been a fighter. That's the approach he'll take to his battle with cancer too. Michelle and I thank Mark for his leadership and service, but also for his courage and tireless advocacy for cancer research, research that has given hope to others who fight this disease every day. And we want Mark to know that he and his family have our continued support and warmest wishes on their journey ahead.

The President's Weekly Address
May 21, 2016

Hi, everybody. Last summer, I got a letter from a woman named Elizabeth Paredes from Tucson, Arizona. Elizabeth is the mom of a 3-year-old boy and an assistant manager at a sandwich shop. She earns about $2,000 a month, and she routinely works some 50 hours a week, sometimes even more. But because of outdated overtime regulations, she doesn't have to be paid a dime of overtime. She wrote: "It's not easy work and requires a lot of time away from my son . . . at times, I find [it's] not worth it."

Things like the 40-hour workweek and overtime are two of the most basic pillars of a middle class life. But for all the changes we've seen in our economy, our overtime rules have only been updated once since the 1970s—just once. In fact, 40 years ago, more than 60 percent of workers were eligible for overtime based on their salaries. But today, that number is down to 7 percent. Only 7 percent of full-time salaried workers are eligible for overtime based on their income.

That's why this week, my administration took a step to help more workers get the overtime pay they've earned. The Department of Labor finalized a rule to extend overtime protections to 4.2 million more Americans. It's a move that will boost wages for working Americans by $12 billion over the next 10 years. We're more than doubling the overtime salary threshold. And what that means is, most salaried workers who earn less than about $47,500 a year will qualify for overtime. Or their employers can choose to give them a raise so that they earn more than $47,500. Or if employers don't want to raise wages, they can let them go home after 40 hours and see their families or train for new jobs. Any way you slice it, it's a win for working families. And we're making sure that every 3 years, there will be an automatic update to this threshold so that working families won't fall through the cracks for decades at a time ever again.

This is the single biggest step I can take through executive action to raise wages for the American people. It means that millions of hard-working Americans like Elizabeth will either get paid for working more than 40 hours, or they'll get more time with their families. Either way, they win, the middle class wins, and America wins.

We still have more work to do to make sure this economy works for everybody, not just those at the top. That's why I'll never stop fighting for as long as I hold this office to restore the

sense that in America, hard work should be rewarded with the chance to get ahead.

Thanks, everybody. And have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:20 p.m. on May 19 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on May 21. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 20, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 21. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

The President's News Conference With President Tran Dai Quang of Vietnam in Hanoi, Vietnam
May 23, 2016

President Quang. Your Excellency, President of the United States of America, Mr. Barack Obama, ladies and gentlemen: On behalf of the leaders of the party, state, and the people of Vietnam, once again, I'd like to warmly welcome President Barack Obama and the high-level delegation of the U.S. Government on your official visit to Vietnam.

Mr. President and I had a very productive talk on bilateral relations, regional and global issues of common interest. We discussed the implementation of the joint statement on the Vietnam-U.S. comprehensive partnership signed in July 2013 and the joint vision statement between the two countries in July of 2015 concluded between the high-level leaders of the two countries. We agreed that important progresses in bilateral relations have been made in recent years. Both sides committed to implementing the principles of respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political regime.

During President Obama's official visit, Vietnam and the U.S. agreed to a joint statement on strengthening the comprehensive partnership with added substance, depth, and effectiveness. Both sides agreed to place development cooperation at the center of the bilateral ties.

On this occasion, important deals were also reached in terms of trade, health care, humanitarian assistance, education and training, law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges as well. Both sides agreed to give higher priorities to addressing war legacy issues and committed—continue to work together in this regard.

The U.S. will work with Vietnam on detoxing Bien Hoa Airport after both sides successfully conclude the cleanup project at Danang Airport. Vietnam very much appreciates the U.S. decision to completely lift the ban on lethal weapon sales to Vietnam, which is the clear proof that both countries have completely normalized the relations.

President Obama and I also discussed the future directions of bilateral ties and measures to further deepen bilateral cooperation. We underscored the importance of confidence building and priority for development cooperation in trade and investment, science and technology, human resource development, and addressing climate change. Both sides reaffirmed the commitments to promptly ratify the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, or TPP.

With respect to regional and global issues, President Obama and I agreed that we should set up collaboration at regional and international forums and that the U.S. will support Vietnam in successfully hosting the 2017 APEC summit, as well as participating in U.N. peacekeeping operations.

We also exchanged views on recent developments in the South China Sea. We reiterated continued cooperation on addressing climate change and sustainable use of the Mekong River water resources. We believe that promised growth in Vietnam-U.S relations not only brings about benefits for each country, but also contributes to peace, stability, cooperation, and development in the Asia-Pacific and the

world and the ASEAN-U.S. relationships as well.

I want to thank President Obama personally, the American leadership and people, and American friends for their good will and significant contributions to the normalization and the continued development of the Vietnam-U.S. relations. I wish President Obama and the members of your delegation a successful visit to Vietnam, with fond memories of our country, culture, and hospitality of the Vietnamese people.

Once again, thank you very much for the presence of American and Vietnamese press and media here today. Thank you very much.

President Obama. Well, good afternoon. *Xin chào.* Thank you, President Quang, for your generous words. And let me thank you and the Government and the people of Vietnam for the sincere welcome and hospitality that has been extended to me and to my delegation.

Over the past century, our two nations have known cooperation and then conflict, painful separation, and a long reconciliation. Now, more than two decades of normalized ties between our governments allows us to reach a new moment.

It's clear from this visit that both our peoples are eager for an even closer relationship, a deeper relationship. And I was moved to see so many people lining the streets as we were driving into town today. I bring greetings and friendship of the American people, including some outstanding Members of Congress who are joining me on this visit and so many Vietnamese Americans whose families bind us together and remind us of the values that we share.

I've indicated before that one of my highest foreign policy priorities as President is to ensure that the United States continues to play a larger and long-term role in the Asia-Pacific, which is vital to our security and to our prosperity. We believe the people of this region should live in security, prosperity, and dignity. In pursuit of this vision, we're more deeply engaged across the Asia-Pacific than we have been in decades, and that includes our comprehensive partnership with Vietnam.

If you consider where we have been and where we are now, the transformation in the relations between our two countries is remarkable. Over the past two decades, our trade has surged nearly a hundredfold, supporting jobs and opportunities in both countries. Since I took office, we've boosted U.S. exports to Vietnam by more than 150 percent. We're now the single largest market for Vietnam's exports. American companies are one of the top investors here.

With our Fulbright programs, thousands of our students and scholars have studied together. And more than 13,000 young people across Vietnam are learning new skills as part of our Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative. Vietnam has become one of the top 10 countries with students in the United States. This year, we've welcomed nearly 19,000, the most ever. And last year, Vietnam welcomed nearly half a million American tourists to this country, and I will assure you that more are on the way.

Our two governments are also cooperating more closely than ever. As part of our engagement with ASEAN and the East Asia Summit, we're working together to advance regional security and stability. Vietnam has welcomed American navy ships to your ports. Our militaries are conducting more exchanges and partnering on maritime security.

Together, we're pursuing the Trans-Pacific Partnership, not only to support trade, but to draw our nations closer together and reinforce regional cooperation. We're doing more to meet global challenges, from preventing nuclear terrorism to promoting global health security so that outbreaks of disease don't become epidemics. And with this visit, the United States and Vietnam have agreed to a significant upgrade in our cooperation across the board.

We're taking new steps to give our young people the education and skills that they need to succeed. And I'm very pleased that, for the first time, the Peace Corps will come to Vietnam. Our Peace Corps volunteers will focus on teaching English, and the friendship that our people forge will bring us closer together for decades to come.

American academic and technological leaders—including Intel, Oracle, Arizona State University, and others—will help Vietnamese universities boost training in science, technology, engineering, and math. Harvard Medical School, Johnson & Johnson, GE, and others will join with Vietnam universities to improve medical education. And now that the Government of Vietnam has granted the necessary license, we can say that Fulbright University Vietnam—this country's first nonprofit, independent university—can move forward and open its doors and welcome its first class this fall.

We're increasing trade. With Vietnam's announcement on multiple-entry visas, it will be easier for Americans to come here and do business and travel. President Quang and I just attended a signing ceremony that many of you saw, where American and Vietnamese companies are moving ahead with the new commercial deals worth more than $16 billion. Boeing will sell a hundred aircraft to VietJet. Pratt & Whitney will sell advanced engines. GE Wind will partner with the Vietnamese Government to develop more wind power. Deals like these are a win for both of our countries, helping to fuel Vietnam's economic growth and supporting tens of thousands of American jobs.

We agreed to work to ratify and implement the Trans-Pacific Partnership as soon as possible, because it will support vital economic reforms here, further integrate Vietnam into the global economy, and reduce tariffs on American exports to Vietnam. And we discussed the high standards that Vietnam has committed to meet under TPP on labor, the environment, and intellectual property. And I conveyed that the United States is prepared to offer technical assistance to Vietnam as it works to fully implement these standards so that TPP delivers the benefits that our peoples expect.

With regard to security, the United States will continue to do our part to address the painful legacy of war. On behalf of the American people, including our veterans, I want to thank the Government and the people of Vietnam for the many years of cooperation to account for Americans missing in action, solemn efforts that we'll continue together. We'll continue to help remove unexploded landmines and bombs. And now that our joint effort to remove dioxin—agent orange—from Danang Airport is nearly complete, the United States will help in the cleanup at Bien Hoa Air Base.

We've agreed to continue deepening our defense cooperation, including patrol boats and training for Vietnam's Coast Guard and to work more closely together in responding to humanitarian disasters. And I can also announce that the United States is fully lifting the ban on the sale of military equipment to Vietnam that has been in place for some 50 years. As with all our defense partners, sales will need to still meet strict requirements, including those related to human rights. But this change will ensure that Vietnam has access to the equipment it needs to defend itself, and it removes a lingering vestige of the cold war. It also underscores the commitment of the United States to a fully normalized relationship with Vietnam, including strong defense ties with Vietnam and this region for the long term.

More broadly, the United States and Vietnam are united in our support for a regional order—including in the South China Sea—where international norms and rules are upheld, where there is freedom of navigation and overflight, where lawful commerce is not impeded, and where disputes are resolved peacefully, through legal means, in accordance with international law. I want to repeat that the United States will continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows, and we will support the right of all countries to do the same.

Now, even as we make important progress in the ways that I've just described, there continue to be areas where our two governments disagree, including on democracy and human rights. And I made it clear that the United States does not seek to impose our form of government on Vietnam or any nation. We respect Vietnam's sovereignty and independence. At the same time, we will continue to speak out on behalf of human rights that we believe are universal, including freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and

freedom of assembly. And that includes the right of citizens, through civil society, to organize and help improve their communities and their country.

We believe, and I believe, that nations are stronger and more prosperous when these universal rights are upheld and when our two countries continue to discuss these issues as part of our human rights dialogue in a spirit of construction—constructive and cooperative effort.

And finally, the United States and Vietnam are expanding our cooperation in ways that benefit the world. Under our growing climate change partnership, we'll support Vietnam as it works to meet its commitments under the Paris Agreement. Because our two countries and others have committed to joining the agreement this year, we're within striking distance of it entering into force before anybody expected.

In the meantime, we'll help communities in vulnerable regions, like the Mekong Delta adapt to a changing climate and assist Vietnam's transition to a low-carbon economy. And that includes the low-carbon energy that will come from our cooperation on civil nuclear power. And as Vietnam prepares to deepen its commitment to U.N. peacekeeping, the United States is proud to support Vietnam's new peacekeeping training center.

So, again, President Quang, thank you for your hospitality. Thank you for our work together. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to visit with the Vietnamese people. Maybe I will enjoy some *cà phê sua dá*. [*Laughter*] I believe that the relationship between the Vietnamese people and the United States can be one of the most important in this critical part of the world. And I believe that the upgrade in our ties that we've achieved today will deliver greater security, prosperity, and dignity for both of our peoples for many decades to come.

Xin cám on.

Moderator. Thank you, President Obama and President Quang. And now it's time for questions. The floor is open. I invite Mr.—[*inaudible*]—from Vietnam News Agency.

Q. I'm from the Vietnam News Agency. I have a question for President Quang. Your Excellency, could you advise us and make some comments on the notable advances in Vietnam-U.S. relations over the past two decades? Thank you.

President Quang. Thank you for your question. I want to affirm that over the past two decades, since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in July 1995, Vietnam-U.S. relations have made great strides in many fields. In terms of politics and diplomacy, Vietnam and the U.S. are former enemies turned friends. And now we are comprehensive partners.

The high-level leaders of the two countries often pay a visit to each other, and the relations have grown very well bilaterally and multilaterally. We share the common interests regarding the regional and international issues. And our common interests grow day by day, particularly in relations to the maintenance of peace, stability, cooperation, and development in the region.

With respect to economic cooperation, I'm very pleased to inform you that the two-way trade has grown 130-fold to 44.5 billion U.S. dollars last year. The U.S. is currently the seventh largest investor in Vietnam, and I hope that the U.S. will soon become the biggest investor in Vietnam, as Ambassador Ted Osius once mentioned. The bilateral trade between the two countries has enormous potentials to grow, particularly once the TPP enters into effect.

Regarding education and training cooperation, we have obtained many important progressions. Take, for example, the Fulbright University in Vietnam has recently received its operating license. The number of Vietnamese students studying in the U.S. has grown 56-fold to 28,000 students, the highest number among the ASEAN countries. And our cooperation in defense and security continues to grow in line with the needs of both sides.

The cooperation in remedying the war legacy is now growing more substantively. The two countries have recently completed the phase one of environmental cleanup at Danang Airport, and we will continue to implement the second phase of the project at various other

sites, including Bien Hoa Airport. Together with the progress in bilateral ties, Vietnam and U.S. are working together and enhancing the collaboration on regional and international issues of common interest in international forums.

The advances in the bilateral relations stem from the fact that we increasingly share common concerns and interests. And both sides have fully realized the commitments to respect each other's independence, sovereignty, political regimes, and legitimate interests. The visit of President Barack Obama this time to Vietnam will surely create stronger momentum for the development and promotion of the Vietnam-U.S. relations in the future, contributing to maintenance of peace, stability, cooperation, and development in Asia-Pacific and the wider world.

Thank you very much.

White House Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz. The first question on the American side will come from Matt Spetalnick with Reuters.

Q. Thank you.

President Obama. Hi, Matt.

U.S. Weapons Sales to Vietnam/Vietnam-U.S. Relations/South China Sea Maritime Disputes/Human Rights

Q. I have a question for both Presidents about the lifting of the arms embargo. To what extent do you see a need to build up Vietnam's military deterrent against China's behavior in the South China Sea as part of this decision? Could this include expanded U.S. access to Vietnamese ports, including Cam Ranh Bay?

Directly for President Obama, to what degree will the U.S. decide on weapons sales based on human rights considerations?

And for President Quang, how do you respond to the U.S. push for improved human rights situation in Vietnam?

President Obama. Well, Matt, the decision to lift the ban was not based on China or any other considerations. It was based on our desire to complete what has been a lengthy process of moving towards normalization with Vietnam, a process that began with some very courageous and difficult conversations decades ago, including led by our current Secretary of State John Kerry and Senators Tom Carper and John McCain and a whole bunch of other Vietnam veterans, as well as their counterparts in the Vietnamese Government.

And over time, what we've seen is a progressive deepening and broadening of the relationship. And what became apparent to me and my administration at this point was, is that given all the work we do together across the spectrum of economic, trade, security, humanitarian efforts, that it was appropriate for us not to have a blanket, across-the-board ban. Now, every sale that we make to everybody is viewed as a particular transaction, and we examine what's appropriate and what's not, and there are some very close allies of ours where we may not make a particular sale until we have a better sense of how that piece of equipment may end up being used. So we're going to continue to engage in the case-by-case evaluations of these sales. But what we do not have is a ban that's based on an ideological division between our two countries, because we think that, at this stage, both sides have established a level of trust and cooperation, including between our militaries, that is reflective of common interests and mutual respect.

In fact, one of the things that's happened through this comprehensive partnership is a dialogue between the U.S. and Vietnamese military that we hadn't seen in a very long time. And we already have U.S. vessels that have come here to port. We expect that there will be deepening cooperation between our militaries, oftentimes around how do we respond to humanitarian disasters in this region. There may be occasions in which that means that additional U.S. vessels might visit, but I want to emphasize that we will do so only at the invitation and with the cooperation of the Vietnamese Government, fully respecting their sovereignty and their sensitivities.

Now, there is, I think, a genuine mutual concern with respect to maritime issues between the United States and Vietnam, and I've made no secret of that. Vietnam, along with ASEAN, met at my invitation in Sunnylands,

California, and we put forward a very clear statement that it is important for us to maintain the freedom of navigation and the governance of international norms and rules and law that have helped to create prosperity and promoted commerce and peace and security in this region. And it's my belief that, with respect to the South China Sea—although the United States doesn't support any particular claim—we are supportive of the notion that these issues should be resolved peacefully, diplomatically, in accordance with international rules and norms, and not based on who's the bigger party and can throw their weight around a little bit more.

At the same time, as I indicated in my initial statement, the United States is going to continue to fly and set courses for our ships as international law allows. Our hope is that, ultimately, various claimants and various disputes can be resolved, and we'll do everything that we can to promote that. In the meantime, part of our cooperation with Vietnam is to improve their maritime security posture for a whole host of reasons. But I want to emphasize that my decision to lift the ban really was more reflective of the changing nature of the relationship.

Last point, with respect specifically to human rights, as I indicated in my opening statement, this is an area where we still have differences. There's been modest progress on some of the areas that we've identified as a concern. TPP actually is one of the things that's prompting a series of labor reforms here in Vietnam that could end up being extraordinarily significant. But that is not directly tied to the decision around military sales. Okay?

President Quang. Thank you very much for the question. I just want to make some comments on the human rights cooperation and the general relations between the two countries. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the consistent position and viewpoint of the Vietnamese state and Government is to protect and promote human rights. This is clearly codified and stipulated in the national constitution of Vietnam in 2013. We are now institutionalizing all the regulations into our laws and sublaw documents to respect and promote the human rights in Vietnam.

Over the past 30 years of reform in Vietnam, Vietnam has achieved remarkable progress in socioeconomic development, defense and security, especially in protection and promotion of human rights and the rights of every citizen in Vietnam. Those achievements have been highly recognized and appreciated by the international community. One of the examples—very good examples—to showcase Vietnam's progress, that Vietnam has been elected as a member of the U.N. Human Rights Council in 2014–2016.

As President Obama mentioned earlier, between the two countries, Vietnam and the U.S., we do have the—some differences in some fields, and it is very easy to understand, particularly on human rights. We are of the view that based on the respect and the spirit of mutual understanding, we need to work closely together, expand our dialogue together, and by so doing, we can narrow the gap in understanding and narrowing the differences between the two countries, especially on human rights.

Moderator. And now the floor is still open. I invite other questions. Mr.—[*inaudible*]—from Vietnam Television. Please, you have the floor.

Vietnam-U.S. Relations

Q. [*Inaudible*]—introduce myself. I'm from Vietnam Television. [*Inaudible*] You have visited over 50 countries during your term as U.S. President, and Vietnam is among the last few on the list. So what does this say about the Vietnam-U.S. relations? And how important does the U.S. view on—what Vietnam and its foreign policy? Thank you.

President Obama. Well, I would have liked to have gotten here sooner. And maybe, one of the ways of thinking about it is, we have an expression in the United States: We save the best for last. [*Laughter*] So it's a remarkable country. It's a beautiful country. And I've told the President that, unfortunately, when I visit, I'm usually in meetings all day long. So hopefully, when I'm no longer President, I can come here

with my family, and I can spend a little more time and travel the country a little bit more and get to know the people and eat the food and have a more relaxing schedule.

But the reason I'm here is because Vietnam is extremely important not just to the region, but I think to the world. First of all, I think highlighting the changes that have taken place between our two countries, how just a generation ago we were adversaries and now we are friends, should give us hope, should be a reminder of the ability for us to transform relationships when we have a dialogue that's based on mutual interests and mutual respect and people-to-people exchanges.

Second, Vietnam is a large, vital, growing country in a large, vital, and growing region of the world. I've said this before: The Asia-Pacific region is growing as fast as any place around the world. It is a young and dynamic region. It is full of entrepreneurial spirit, and you're seeing new companies and new jobs being created constantly. So the United States wants to be a part of that.

And we, historically, have had good relations with many countries in this region. We want to make sure that as Vietnam grows and becomes more prosperous and achieves greater opportunity, that the young people of Vietnam have a chance to partner with the young people of the United States—trading, exchanging ideas, working on scientific projects, starting businesses together—because I think that will be good for both countries.

And we think that it is important, from our perspective, that as a leader in ASEAN, that we engage Vietnam bilaterally because we want to continue to strengthen our cooperation with the multilateral organizations like the East Asia Summit and ASEAN where we think we've seen some very real progress over the last several years on everything from commercial issues to disease control to humanitarian issues.

One of the things that we increasingly discover is, it's harder and harder to solve problems by ourselves. It's much easier for us to be able to tackle big problems like climate change or the outbreak of disease or responding to humanitarian disasters when we have a architecture of cooperation already established.

So on all these fronts, we've seen remarkable progress. The announcements that we're making today, I think, should give people an indication of the next stage of the U.S.-Vietnamese relationship. These are big deals, all the things that we mentioned here today. And it indicates a broader and deeper relationship that I'm confident will continue to grow in the future. Okay?

Principal Deputy Press Secretary Schultz. The final question comes from Angela Greiling-Keane with Bloomberg.

Q. Thank you.

President Obama. Hi, Angela.

Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement/U.S. Monetary Policy/Death of Taliban Leader Akhtar Mohammad Mansur in Afghanistan

Q. President Obama, the Trans-Pacific Partnership seems fairly stalled in Congress, and other countries are looking to follow the U.S. lead in terms of how they advance their approval of the agreement. With the deals today announced for Boeing and GE and your visit here to Vietnam, are you looking to change your strategy in how you seek approval for the Trans-Pacific Partnership in Congress? And do you think that the agreement should be amended to address currency manipulation?

Secondly, President Obama, can you comment on the killing of Taliban leader Mullah Mansur and on Pakistan's concern about that strike happening on its soil? Can you also comment on whether this signals a new offensive in Afghanistan and whether you're concerned that an even more hardline leader might take his place?

For President Quang, are you concerned about the lack of enthusiasm for the Trans-Pacific Partnership in the U.S. Congress and what that means for the deal in the end? And how do you respond to China's criticism of the U.S. pursuing what China says is a one-sided, selfish agenda in Asia that risks regional peace?

President Obama. So, first of all, on TPP, Angela, I haven't been around as long as Senators Carper or Secretary Kerry, but I've spent

enough time in the Senate to know that every trade deal is painful, because folks are always seeing if they can get an even better deal. And especially when you have multiple parties involved, folks are going to be scrutinizing it, they're going to be debating it, and in an election year, you can anticipate that some folks are going to try to score political points off it.

Having said that, I remain confident we're going to get it done. And the reason I'm confident is because it's the right thing to do. It's good for the country. It's good for America. It's good for the region. It's good for the world.

And I know I've sold this to you before, but let me reiterate: This is the fastest growing part of the world. This represents an enormous market for the United States. Most countries here already sell their stuff to the United States, and we have relatively low tariffs. In other words, we put relatively low taxes on goods that are coming into the United States. In contrast, tariffs are significantly higher for U.S. goods being sold here. So a deal that gets rid of 18,000 taxes on U.S. goods into the largest, fastest growing markets of the world, that's a good deal for American businesses and American workers.

Number two, one of the biggest complaints about trade deals historically has been that it opens up our markets to countries with lower wages, harsher labor practices, less environmental regulation. Well, if you're signing up for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, you are making commitments that are enforceable to raise labor standards, to ensure that workers have a voice, to attend to environmental problems. And so this gives us the ability to engage with a country like Vietnam and work with them on all those fronts, the precise things that people, in the past, have been concerned about when it comes to trading with other countries.

So I have not yet seen a credible argument that once we get TPP in place we're going to be worse off. We are demonstrably better off. American workers and American businesses are better off if we get this deal passed. And I'm confident we will get it passed.

Now, the politics of it will be noisy. That was true when I, for example, inherited the Korean free trade agreement or the Colombian and Panamanian free trade agreements when I came into office. But we got them done. And I'm confident that we'll get them done this time, as well, although it will—there will be ups and downs and bumps along the way.

With respect to currency manipulation, we have provisions in TPP that advance the transparency and reporting functions that allow us to monitor whether we think that currency manipulation is taking place. One of the debates that took place—and there have been some who argue that we should have enforceable provisions that if you see a currency going down too far that we should be able to impose tariffs on that country. The problem is, is that it's very hard to sort out sometimes why a currency is going down and whether it's actually being manipulated. And frankly, for us to bind other countries to commitments about their monetary policy would mean we were also binding our Federal Reserve to the claims of other countries in terms of how it implements our monetary policy, and that's not something that we would do. We would not give up sovereignty with respect to our monetary policy in that way. But we have strengthened a number of the provisions that are already contained in TPP that will allow us to put on notice folks who we think are engaging in competitive devaluations.

Finally, on the Taliban leader, Mr. Mansur, it has been confirmed that he is dead. And he is an individual who, as head of the Taliban, was specifically targeting U.S. personnel and troops inside of Afghanistan who were there as part of the mission that I've set to be able to maintain a counterterrorism platform and provide assistance and training to the Afghan military forces there. So this does not represent a shift in our approach. We are not reentering the day-to-day combat operations that are currently being conducted by Afghan security forces. Our job is to help Afghanistan secure its own country, not to have our men and women in uniform engage in that fight for them.

On the other hand, where we have a high-profile leader who has been consistently part of operations and plans to potentially harm U.S.

personnel and who has been resistant to the kinds of peace talks and reconciliation that ultimately could bring an end to decades of war in Afghanistan, then it is my responsibility as Commander in Chief not to stand by, but to make sure that we send a clear signal to the Taliban and others that we're going to protect our people. And that's exactly the message that has been sent.

President Quang. Let me respond to this question concerning the Trans-Pacific Partnership, TPP. In our view, TPP is a significant trade and economic linkage, contributing to sustaining the dynamism and the role as a driver for economic growth in our country, as well as in the Asia-Pacific region. And for Vietnam, TPP and Vietnam's participation in TPP is one step undertaken by the Vietnamese Government in our process of extensive international integration.

President Obama. Mr. President, sorry to interrupt. We're not getting a translation.

Interpreter. Testing one, two, three.

President Obama. For you?

Interpreter. Can you hear, Mr. President?

President Obama. Okay.

Interpreter. Testing one, two, three.

President Obama. It's just, I'm sure that he was saying something very wise and important, and we wanted to make sure that we all heard it.

President Quang. So I would like to add that Vietnam, together with other TPP countries, have been making efforts to narrow differences, to promote cooperation in the spirit of mutual understanding and mutual respect. And we will try to reduce differences in a spirit of constructiveness and understanding and paying attention to one another's legitimate interests. And the finalization of TPP is also the successful outcomes of all 12 members of the TPP, rather than any individual effort. And we are prepared to ratify TPP, and we stand ready to implement all the commitments under TPP.

Moderator. Your Excellency, now we have a technical problem with the translation system. So, Mr. President—President Quang, could you please repeat again your answer?

President Obama. [*Laughter*]

President Quang. And, yes, I want to redirect my comments on the TPP. In our view, the TPP is a very significant trade and economic linkage contributing to the sustainment of dynamism and the role as a driver of economic growth in Asia-Pacific region.

As for Vietnam, TPP is a one step forward in implementation of the country's deep and comprehensive international integration policy, which aims at promoting the national economic growth of Vietnam. Vietnam has worked together with other member countries to narrow the differences in the spirit of constructiveness, understanding, and paying new attention to one another's legitimate interests. The finalization of TPP is also the result of the endeavors from 12 members of the agreement, rather than the individual effort of any single country. And Vietnam is now very actively promoting and accelerating the ratification of the TPP, and Vietnam is committed to fully implementing all the policies and provisions of the TPP.

Moderator. Thank you very much, President Tran Dai Quang, and President Barack Obama.

Ladies and gentlemen, with that, I declare the press conference adjourned. And please stay in the room for the departure of the two Presidents. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:59 p.m. in the hotel ballroom at the International Convention Centre. President Quang, the moderator, and a reporter spoke in Vietnamese, and their remarks were translated by interpreters.

Remarks at a State Luncheon Hosted by President Tran Dai Quang of Vietnam in Hanoi
May 23, 2016

President Quang. The Honorable Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, distinguished American guests, ladies and gentlemen: On behalf of the Vietnamese leaders and people, once again, I have the great honor to extend a warm welcome to Mr. President and his high-level delegation. Mr. President, thank you very much for traveling such a long way, across the globe, to visit Vietnam. I'm sure that during your stay here, you'll be able to see for yourself the hospitality and friendship that the Vietnamese people extend to you and to the American people.

With a deepened mutual understanding between the two countries and impressive talks between the two sides, your visit marks another crucial milestone in our bilateral relationship and creates a strong momentum for our comprehensive partnership to endure with greater substance in the future, both bilaterally and within the regional and global frameworks.

To become comprehensive partners, as we are today, both countries have had to traverse many ups and downs of history and overcome the profound grievances left behind by the war syndromes and prevail over seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Even during those days, the pioneers in promoting the Vietnam-U.S. friendly ties never wavered in the conviction of a brighter future for the bilateral relations. The reversed development of the Vietnam-U.S. relations in the past years is clear evidence of President Ho Chi Minh's statement, "Bear the cold winter, and we shall be welcomed by warm spring."

Proceeding from the tradition of peace and friendship, the Vietnamese people always wish to cultivate the friendship with peoples around the world, including the American people. We will always remember and are grateful to American people's contributions to putting an end to an unhappy chapter in the two countries' history. While the wounds of the war have not been fully healed in both countries and differences remain in the bilateral relations, as time goes by we have become more deeply aware of the past and present and have conviction that a friendly and cooperative relationship between our two nations will be in the best interest of both peoples, as well as that of peace, stability, cooperation, and development in the Asia-Pacific and the world.

Mr. President, as you once said—and allow me to quote—"If you're walking down the right path, and you're willing to keep walking, eventually you will make progress." And I would like to recall a historical event in February 1946. In his letter to President Harry Truman, President Ho Chi Minh expressed his wish that Vietnam and the United States of America would develop a full cooperation. With the establishment of the comprehensive partnership, we're taking the path that President Ho Chi Minh had chosen. We're confident that relations on the basis of friendship, equality, cooperation, and respect for each other's political regimes and legitimate interests is the only path leading to a brighter and more prosperous future for our next generations. Our nations have a bright future. And together, we can write new chapters of our relationship.

With that, I would like to kindly invite Mr. President, distinguished American guests, and you all to join me in a toast. To the friendship and comprehensive cooperation between Vietnam and the United States of America. To the good health of Mr. President and to you all. Thank you.

[*At this point, President Quang offered a toast.*]

President Obama. Good afternoon. President Quang, General Secretary Trong, Prime Minister Phúc, Chairwoman Kim Ngân, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. To you and to the Government and the people of Vietnam, I want to thank you for your kind welcome and hospitality that you've extended to me and my delegation today. *Xin cám on.*

I'm told there is a saying here in Vietnam—which I will not say in Vietnamese—but it says, "When you eat the fruit, think about the one who planted the tree." And today we pay our respects to all who came before us—Vietnamese and Americans—who planted and tended the tree that has become our comprehensive partnership.

I especially want to thank all those who served both our countries decades ago and then took on one last mission, and that was the mission to help our nations reconcile. For you, that conflict was a bitter memory. But today Vietnam and America show the world that hearts can change and peace is possible. And we thank Secretary Kerry and all our veterans here today, both Vietnamese and American, who had the courage not only to fight, but more importantly, had the courage to make peace.

I think oftentimes our veterans can show us the way. One American veteran came here and described meeting a former North Vietnamese soldier. "He came up and shook my hand, and now we're friends," this veteran said. "Without the high-powered politicians, people can just get along as human beings."

The Vietnamese and Americans are now following that advice, getting along as human beings: as students and scholars, as entrepreneurs and innovators, as doctors and as scientists, as sailors and peacekeepers on behalf of the security and peace that we seek around the world.

I know that here in Vietnam, you draw inspiration from the lotus flower—*hoa sen.* It takes root in the mud and thus is a symbol of hope amid hardship. It survives where other flowers cannot and thus is a symbol of strength and endurance. It radiates color and is thus a symbol of beauty.

So I'd like to propose a toast: To the spirit of the lotus, in the perseverance and the hopes of the Vietnamese people, in the strength and endurance of the partnership between our two nations, and in the beauty of both of our peoples and the desire to live in peace, dignity, and justice. *Chúc súc khoe!*

[*President Obama offered a toast.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:02 p.m. in the ceremonial banquet hall at the International Convention Centre. In his remarks, he referred to St. Francis, SD, resident and Vietnam war veteran Francis Whitebird. President Quang spoke in Vietnamese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Joint Statement by President Obama and President Tran Dai Quang of Vietnam

May 23, 2016

At the invitation of the President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam Tran Dai Quang, President of the United States of America Barack Obama paid an historic visit to Vietnam to celebrate the Comprehensive Partnership between the two countries and to advance their shared vision for the future. On the occasion of the visit and the May 23, 2016 meeting between the two leaders, the United States and Vietnam adopted this Joint Statement.

Both sides noted with satisfaction the rapid, substantive, and comprehensive growth of U.S.-Vietnam relations over the past year, guided by the U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership of 2013 and the Joint Vision Statement issued during the historic visit to the United States by General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam Nguyen Phu Trong in July 2015.

The common interests of the United States and Vietnam continued to expand through intensifying exchanges of delegations at all levels and maintaining dialogue mechanisms; promoting economic growth thanks to enhanced trade and investment relations; and deepening cooperation in education, science and technology,

health, security and national defense, people-to-people ties, human rights, humanitarian, and war legacy issues. The increasingly enhanced U.S.-Vietnam relations have positively contributed to the joint efforts of the international community in maintaining peace, stability, cooperation, and respect for international law in the region, and building a rules-based region. Together, we are addressing regional and global challenges, including climate change, sustainable development, global health, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, peacekeeping, and wildlife trafficking.

Toward that end, the two countries reaffirmed their obligations to observe the UN Charter and commitments to respect international law, their respective political systems, independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. The United States and Vietnam also committed to strengthening and developing the ASEAN Community, and to working with the international community to respond to global challenges. Both sides committed to work together to advance the Comprehensive Partnership in the following areas:

Strengthening Political and Diplomatic Ties

Both sides pledged to continue to exchange delegations at all levels, especially high-level delegations, and to strengthen dialogue between agencies of the two governments. The two sides also intend to expand annual high-level dialogues between their two foreign ministries to discuss measures to strengthen the Comprehensive Partnership and discuss other issues of mutual interest. The two sides concurred that strengthening mutual trust plays a crucial role in enabling sustainable, healthy, and long-term friendship and cooperation.

Advancing Economic Ties

The two countries resolve to focus on fostering economic cooperation, including trade, investment, science and technology, human resource training, and climate change. The two sides stated that the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is economically and strategically important, and would promote trade and investment between them, accelerate inclusive economic growth, and create jobs. The two sides reaffirmed their commitments to seek early ratification and full implementation of this high-standard agreement, including commitments on investment, business facilitation and development, intellectual property, textile, services, labor, and environment. The United States pledged to support Vietnam through robust technical assistance and capacity-building programs to effectively implement and meet the high standards of the TPP. The two sides also reaffirmed their commitment to ensure that economic growth is inclusive and creates opportunity for all, which is furthered by fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable economic development. The two sides highlighted that development cooperation continues to be a driving force in the bilateral relationship. Both countries pledged to promote bilateral trade and investment, and would continue to work toward access for industrial, agricultural, and aquacultural goods. The United States and Vietnam committed to consult through the enhanced bilateral working group in a cooperative and comprehensive manner regarding Vietnam's desire to be recognized as a market economy. Both countries welcomed the conclusion of major commercial deals on the occasion of the visit, such as VietJet's purchase of 100 Boeing aircraft and Pratt & Whitney engines, as well as a wind energy MOU between GE and the Vietnamese government.

Deepening People-to-People Ties.

Both sides affirmed their support for the enhancement of people-to-people ties to strengthen mutual understanding, cooperation, and friendship between the two peoples. The United States welcomed the Vietnamese government's approval of the Peace Corps to teach the English language in Vietnam. The United States and Vietnam hailed the establishment of Fulbright University Vietnam, which will be a world-class Vietnamese university. Both sides welcomed the bilateral arrangement granting one-year, multiple-entry visas for short-term business and tourism travelers from both countries. Both sides highly

valued and recognized the success of the Vietnamese-American community and their contributions to the promotion of bilateral ties.

Enhancing Security and Defense Cooperation

The United States and Vietnam reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen defense cooperation between the two countries as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding on Advancing Bilateral Defense Cooperation in 2011 and the U.S.-Vietnam Joint Vision Statement on Defense Relations signed in 2015, giving priority to humanitarian cooperation, war legacy, maritime security, peacekeeping, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Both sides reiterated they would continue to strengthen cooperation in the fields of security, combatting transnational crime, and cyber security. Vietnam welcomed the U.S. government decision to fully lift the ban on the sale of lethal weapons to Vietnam. Vietnam welcomed U.S. maritime security assistance—including through the Maritime Security Initiative (MSI), the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, and Foreign Military Financing—and looked forward to working with the United States to enhance Vietnam's maritime capabilities. The United States and Vietnam signed a letter of intent to establish a working group for the Cooperative Humanitarian and Medical Storage Initiative (CHAMSI), which will advance cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The United States reaffirmed its support for Vietnam's peacekeeping efforts with an aim of assisting Vietnam's first deployment of UN peacekeeping forces by 2017.

Both countries expressed their satisfaction with their joint efforts to advance humanitarian and war legacy issues. In particular, the United States valued Vietnam's active cooperation to support the humanitarian mission of providing the fullest possible accounting for U.S. personnel still missing from the war. Both sides committed to continue their cooperation on unexploded ordnance removal. Vietnam welcomed cooperation leading to the successful conclusion of the first phase of dioxin remediation at Danang International Airport, with the final phase already underway. The United States committed to partnering with Vietnam to make a significant contribution to the clean-up of dioxin contamination at Bien Hoa Air Base.

Promoting Human Rights and Legal Reform

Both countries pledged to continue supporting the promotion and protection of human rights in conformity with their own constitutions and respective international commitments. The two countries welcomed the results of positive, frank, and constructive dialogues on human rights, especially the 20th round of the U.S.-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue in April 2016, to narrow differences and continue to build trust. The United States welcomed Vietnam's ongoing efforts in improving its legal system and undertaking legal reform in order to better guarantee the human rights and fundamental freedoms for everyone in accordance with the 2013 Constitution. Vietnam informed the United States of its plan to revise, amend, and draft new laws, including the Law on Religion and Belief, Law on Association, the Amended Law on Legal Aid, the Amended Law on Legal Record, and Law on the Promulgation of Administrative Decisions. Both sides recognized the contributions that social and religious organizations continue to make in the fields of education, healthcare, and social services in both countries. Both sides encouraged further cooperation to ensure that all people—regardless of gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation, and including persons with disabilities—fully enjoy their human rights. The United States and Vietnam welcomed a letter of agreement on law enforcement and justice sector assistance.

Addressing Regional and Global Challenges

The United States and Vietnam reaffirmed their shared commitment to the peaceful resolution of territorial and maritime disputes, including full respect for diplomatic and legal processes, without resorting to the threat or use of force in accordance with the UN Charter and international laws, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

(UNCLOS). Both countries underscored the commitments of parties to the disputes to refrain from actions that aggravate or broaden the disputes and recognize the importance of strictly implementing the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties (DOC) and working to accelerate negotiation with substantive results toward the early conclusion of the Code of Conduct (COC). In this regard, both countries expressed serious concerns over recent developments in the South China Sea that have caused tensions, eroded trust and threatened peace, security, and stability. Both countries recognized the imperative of upholding the freedom of navigation and overflight and unimpeded lawful commerce in the South China Sea, called for nonmilitarization and self-restraint in addressing disputes, reaffirmed shared commitments under the Sunnylands Declaration, and committed to working closely with other ASEAN partners in implementing that Declaration.

The United States reaffirmed its commitment to actively coordinate with and support Vietnam in successfully organizing APEC 2017.

The United States and Vietnam reaffirmed their commitment to addressing climate change and implementing the Paris Agreement. They shared a desire to see the early entry into force of the Agreement, and are both committed to formally joining the Agreement in 2016. The United States and Vietnam pledged to take a number of practical actions to advance climate mitigation and adaptation, as well as enhance transparency and capacity building in the U.S.-Vietnam Climate Partnership, including in the Mekong River Delta. Future work will build on the results of collaboration between the United States and Vietnam in implementing programs under the Lower Mekong Initiative. The United States pledged its continued support for Vietnam in responding to the latter's worst drought in over 90 years and salinization, and in advancing sustainable economic development in the lower Mekong basin. As a development partner of the Mekong River Commission (MRC), the United States expressed its commitment to supporting cooperation among MRC members and between MRC members and other regional mechanisms in using, managing, and developing trans-boundary water resources in an effective and sustainable manner.

The two countries expressed support for an expanding civil nuclear partnership as we seek to reduce emissions from the global power sector, the signing of the Administrative Arrangement under the U.S.-Vietnam Agreement for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy ("123" Agreement), and the highest standards of nuclear safety, security, and nonproliferation. Both countries welcomed the successful outcomes of the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit and pledged to continue to work together to strengthen the global nuclear security architecture. The two sides intend to establish the U.S.-Vietnam Joint Commission on Civil Nuclear Cooperation to facilitate the implementation of the 123 Agreement.

The two countries committed to sustain their successful cooperation and joint leadership under the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), particularly with respect to collaboration on the emergency operations centers and outbreak detection and response in humans and animals, as well as implementation of a national roadmap to achieve each of the GHSA targets. The United States pledged its support to improve Vietnam's capacity in coastal medicine. The United States and Vietnam committed to work together regionally and globally to prevent, detect, and respond to epidemic threats, and both countries affirmed to undertake a joint evaluation of these efforts in 2016.

Both countries also reaffirmed their commitment to combating wildlife trafficking and protecting biodiversity under the new U.S.-Vietnam Partnership to Combat Wildlife Trafficking.

Deepening a Long-Term Partnership

Both sides agreed to further enhance the U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership, making it deeper, more substantive, and more effective in order to better serve the interests of the two peoples for peace, stability, and cooperation in the region and the world.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on the Death of Akhtar Mohammad Mansur
May 23, 2016

Today marks an important milestone in our longstanding effort to bring peace and prosperity to Afghanistan. With the death of Taliban leader Akhtar Mohammad Mansur, we have removed the leader of an organization that has continued to plot against and unleash attacks on American and coalition forces, to wage war against the Afghan people, and align itself with extremist groups like Al Qa'ida.

Mansur rejected efforts by the Afghan Government to seriously engage in peace talks and end the violence that has taken the lives of countless innocent Afghan men, women, and children. The Taliban should seize the opportunity to pursue the only real path for ending this long conflict: joining the Afghan Government in a reconciliation process that leads to lasting peace and stability.

As an enduring partner of the Afghan people, the United States will continue to help strengthen Afghan security forces and support President Ghani and the National Unity Government in their efforts to forge the peace and progress that Afghans deserve. We will continue taking action against extremist networks that target the United States. We will work on shared objectives with Pakistan, where terrorists that threaten all our nations must be denied safe haven. After so many years of conflict, today gives the people of Afghanistan and the region a chance at a different, better future.

I thank our dedicated military and intelligence personnel who have once again sent a clear message to all those who target our people and our partners: You will have no safe haven. Today is a day for us to give thanks to all of the Americans who have served in Afghanistan for so many years with a selfless commitment to the security of our Nation and a better future for the Afghan people.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Civil Society Leaders in Hanoi, Vietnam
May 24, 2016

I just had a wonderful conversation with some preeminent civil society activists here in Vietnam. And I just want to thank them for taking the time to meet with me and discussing with me some of the important work that they're doing, and the progress that's being made in—here in Vietnam.

We have a wide range of activists here. We have pastors whose congregations are doing important work helping individuals fight addiction and encouraging the faithful around the values of their faith. We have advocates on behalf of the disabled who are doing important work to make sure that they have full access to jobs and opportunity here in Vietnam. We have LGBT activists who are making sure that the marginalized in society have a voice. We have advocates on behalf of freedom of speech and press and the Internet, who are doing important training throughout the country. We have a very popular artist here who is speaking out on behalf of freedom of speech and expression and artists throughout Vietnam.

And so what I've heard consistently from all of them is a recognition that Vietnam has made remarkable strides in many ways—the economy is growing quickly, the Internet is booming, and there's a growing confidence here—but that, as I indicated yesterday, there are still areas of significant concern in terms of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, accountability with respect to government.

I emphasized in my meetings yesterday with the President, the Prime Minister, the General Secretary, the Chairwoman of the National Assembly that we respect the sovereignty and independence of Vietnam. Ultimately, it's up to the Vietnamese people to determine how their society functions and the nature of their government.

But we do believe in certain universal values, and it's important for us to speak out on behalf of those values wherever we go. And it's particularly important and useful for me to hear directly from those who, under often very difficult conditions, are willing to make their voices heard on behalf of greater freedom and human rights.

I should note that there were several other activists who were invited who were prevented from coming for various reasons. And I think it's an indication of the fact that, although there has been some modest progress—and it is our hope that through some of the legal reforms that are being drafted and passed there will be more progress—there are still folks who find it very difficult to assemble and organize peacefully around issues that they care deeply about.

And it's my hope that the Government of Vietnam comes to recognize what we've recognized and what so many countries around the world have recognized, and that is that it's very hard to prosper in this modern economy if you haven't fully unleashed the potential of your people. And your people's potential, in part, derives from their ability to express themselves and express new ideas, to try to right wrongs that are taking place in the society. And so it's my hope that, increasingly, the Vietnamese Government, seeing the enormous strides that the country is making, has more confidence that its people want to work together, but also want to be able to assemble and participate in the society in ways that will be good for everybody in the long run.

So, again, I want to thank all of you for your courageous work, and I want you to know that you will continue to have a friend in the United States of America, because we think the work that you're doing is work that's important everywhere, including, by the way, in the United States, where there are all sorts of activists and people who are mobilizing, oftentimes are very critical of me and don't always make my life comfortable, but ultimately, I think it is a better country and I do a better job as President because I'm subject to that accountability.

Thank you so much. I very much appreciate it. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in Event Rooms 2 and 3 at the JW Marriott Hotel Hanoi. In his remarks, he referred to musician and activist Mai Khoi; and President Tran Dai Quang, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuân Phúc, Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phú Trong, and National Assembly Chair Nguyen Thi Kim Ngân of Vietnam. He also referred to human rights activist Nguyen Quang A, independent journalist and blogger Pham Doan Trang, and human rights defense lawyer Ha Huy Son, who were invited to the meeting, but barred from attending by Vietnamese security officials. Also participating in the meeting were reporter Mai Phan Loi; and lawyer Ta Ngoc Van.

Remarks in Hanoi
May 24, 2016

Xin chào! Xin chào, Vietnam! Thank you. Thank you so much. Please. To the Government and the people of Vietnam, thank you for this very warm welcome and the hospitality that you've shown me on this visit. And thank all of you for being here today. We have Vietnamese from across this great country, including so many young people who represent the dynamism and the talent and the hope of Vietnam.

On this visit, my heart has been touched by the kindness for which the Vietnamese people are known. In the many people who have been lining the streets, smiling and waving, I feel the friendship between our peoples. Last night I visited the Old Quarter here in Hanoi and enjoyed some outstanding Vietnamese food. I tried some *bún cha*, drank some *Bia Hà Noi*. [*Laughter*] But I have to say, the busy streets of this city, I've never seen so many motorbikes in my life. [*Laughter*] So I haven't had to try to cross the street so far, but maybe when I come back and visit, you can tell me how. [*Laughter*]

I am not the first American President to come to Vietnam in recent times. But I am the first, like so many of you, who came of age after the war between our countries. When the last U.S. Forces left Vietnam, I was just 13 years old. So my first exposure to Vietnam and the Vietnamese people came when I was growing up in Hawaii, with its proud Vietnamese American community there.

At the same time, many people in this country are much younger than me. Like my two daughters, many of you have lived your whole lives knowing only one thing, and that is peace and normalized relations between Vietnam and the United States. So I come here mindful of the past, mindful of our difficult history, but focused on the future: the prosperity, security, and human dignity that we can advance together.

I also come here with a deep respect for Vietnam's ancient heritage. For millennia, farmers have tended these lands, a history revealed in the *Dông Son* drums. At this bend in the river, Hanoi has endured for more than a thousand years. The world came to treasure Vietnamese silks and paintings, and a great Temple of Literature stands as a testament to your pursuit of knowledge. And yet, over the centuries, your fate was too often dictated by others. Your beloved land was not always your own. But like bamboo, the unbroken spirit of the Vietnamese people was captured by Lý Thuong Kiet: "The Southern emperor rules the Southern land. Our destiny is writ in Heaven's Book."

So today we also remember the longer history between Vietnamese and Americans that is too often overlooked. More than 200 years ago, when our Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson, sought rice for his farm, he looked to the rice of Vietnam, which he said had "the reputation of being whitest to the eye, best flavored to the taste, and most productive." And soon after, American trade ships arrived in your ports seeking commerce.

During the Second World War, Americans came here to support your struggle against occupation. When American pilots were shot down, the Vietnamese people helped rescue them. And on the day that Vietnam declared its independence, crowds took to the streets of this city, and Ho Chi Minh evoked the American Declaration of Independence. He said: "All people are created equal. The Creator has endowed them with inviolable rights. Among these rights are the right to life, the right to liberty, and the right to pursuit of happiness."

In another time, the profession of these shared ideals and our common story of throwing off colonialism might have brought us closer together sooner. But instead, cold war rivalries and fears of communism pulled us into conflict. Like other conflicts throughout human history, we learned once more a bitter truth: that war, no matter what our intentions may be, brings suffering and tragedy.

At your war memorial not far from here, and with family altars across this country, you remember some 3 million Vietnamese, soldiers and civilians, on both sides, who lost their lives. At our memorial wall in Washington, we can touch the names of 58,315 Americans who gave their lives in the conflict. In both our countries, our veterans and families of the fallen still ache for the friends and loved ones that they lost. Just as we learned in America that, even if we disagree about a war, we must always honor those who serve and welcome them home with the respect they deserve. We can join together today, Vietnamese and Americans, and acknowledge the pain and the sacrifices on both sides.

More recently, over the past two decades, Vietnam has achieved enormous progress, and today, the world can see the strides that you have made. With economic reforms and trade agreements, including with the United States, you have entered the global economy, selling your goods around the world. More foreign investment is coming in. And with one of the fastest growing economies in Asia, Vietnam has moved up to become a middle-income nation.

We see Vietnam's progress in the skyscrapers and high rises of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, new shopping malls, and urban centers. We see it in the satellites Vietnam puts into space and a new generation that is online, launching startups and running new ventures. We see it in the tens of millions of Vietnamese

connected on Facebook and Instagram. And you're not just posting selfies, although I hear you do that a lot. [*Laughter*] And so far, there have been a number of people who have already asked me for selfies. [*Laughter*] You're also raising your voices for causes that you care about, like saving the old trees of Hanoi.

So all this dynamism has delivered real progress in people's lives. Here in Vietnam, you've dramatically reduced extreme poverty, you've boosted family incomes and lifted millions into a fast-growing middle class. Hunger, disease, child and maternal mortality are all down. The number of people with clean drinking water and electricity, the number of boys and girls in school, and your literacy rate—these are all up. So this is extraordinary progress. This is what you have been able to achieve in a very short time.

And as Vietnam has transformed, so has the relationship between our two nations. We learned a lesson taught by the venerable Thích Nhat Hanh, who said, "In true dialogue, both sides are willing to change." In this way, the very war that had divided us became a source for healing. It allowed us to account for the missing and finally bring them home. It allowed us to help remove landmines and unexploded bombs, because no child should ever lose a leg just playing outside. Even as we continue to assist Vietnamese with disabilities, including children, we are also continuing to help remove agent orange—dioxins—so that Vietnam can reclaim more of your land. We're proud of our work together in Danang, and we look forward to supporting your efforts in Bien Hoa.

Let's also not forget that the reconciliation between our countries was led by our veterans who once faced each other in battle. Think of Senator John McCain, who was held for years here as a prisoner of war, meeting General Giáp, who said our countries should not be enemies, but friends. Think of all the veterans, Vietnamese and American, who have helped us heal and build new ties. Few have done more in this regard over the years than a former Navy lieutenant, and now Secretary of State for the United States, John Kerry, who is here today. And on behalf of all of us, John, we thank you for your extraordinary efforts.

Because our veterans showed us the way, because warriors had the courage to pursue peace, our peoples are now closer than ever before. Our trade has surged. Our students and scholars learn together. We welcome more Vietnamese students to America than from any other country in Southeast Asia. And every year, you welcome more and more American tourists, including young Americans with their backpacks, to Hanoi's 36 Streets and the shops of Hoi An and the imperial city of Hue. As Vietnamese and Americans, we can all relate to those words written by Van Cao: "From now, we know each other's homeland; from now, we learn to feel for each other."

As President, I've built on this progress. With our new comprehensive partnership, our governments are working more closely together than ever before. And with this visit, we've put our relationship on a firmer footing for decades to come. In a sense, the long story between our two nations that began with Thomas Jefferson more than two centuries ago has now come full circle. It's taken many years and required great effort. But now we can say something that was once unimaginable: Today, Vietnam and the United States are partners.

And I believe our experience holds lessons for the world. At a time when many conflicts seem intractable, seem as if they will never end, we have shown that hearts can change and that a different future is possible when we refuse to be prisoners of the past. We've shown how peace can be better than war. We've shown that progress and human dignity is best advanced by cooperation and not conflict. That's what Vietnam and America can show the world.

Now, America's new partnership with Vietnam is rooted in some basic truths. Vietnam is an independent, sovereign nation, and no other nation can impose its will on you or decide your destiny. Now, the United States has an interest here. We have an interest in Vietnam's success. But our comprehensive partnership is still in its early stages. And with the time I have

left, I want to share with you the vision that I believe can guide us in the decades ahead.

First, let's work together to create real opportunity and prosperity for all of our people. We know the ingredients for economic success in the 21st century. In our global economy, investment and trade flows to wherever there is rule of law, because no one wants to pay a bribe to start a business. Nobody wants to sell their goods or go to school if they don't know how they're going to be treated. In knowledge-based economies, jobs go to where people have the freedom to think for themselves and exchange ideas and to innovate. And real economic partnerships are not just about one country extracting resources from another. They're about investing in our greatest resource, which is our people and their skills and their talents, whether you live in a big city or a rural village. And that's the kind of partnership that America offers.

As I announced yesterday, the Peace Corps will come to Vietnam for the first time, with a focus on teaching English. And a generation after young Americans came here to fight, a new generation of Americans are going to come here to teach and build and deepen the friendships between us. Some of America's leading technology companies and academic institutions are joining Vietnamese universities to strengthen training in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine. Because even as we keep welcoming more Vietnamese students to America, we also believe that young people deserve a world-class education right here in Vietnam.

It's one of the reasons why we're very excited that this fall, the new Fulbright University Vietnam will open in Ho Chi Minh City: this nation's first independent, nonprofit university, where there will be full academic freedom and scholarships for those in need. Students, scholars, researchers will focus on public policy and management and business; on engineering and computer science; and liberal arts, everything from the poetry of Nguyen Du, to the philosophy of Phan Chu Trinh, to the mathematics of Ngô Bao Châu.

And we're going to keep partnering with young people and entrepreneurs, because we believe that if you can just access the skills and technology and capital you need, then nothing can stand in your way, and that includes, by the way, the talented women of Vietnam. We think gender equality is an important principle. From Trung Sisters to today, strong, confident women have always helped move Vietnam forward. And the evidence is clear—I say this wherever I go around the world—families, communities, and countries are more prosperous when girls and women have an equal opportunity to succeed in school and at work and in government. That's true everywhere, and it's true here in Vietnam.

We'll keep working to unleash the full potential of your economy with the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Now, here in Vietnam, TPP will let you sell more of your products to the world, and it will attract new investment. TPP will require reforms to protect workers and rule of law and intellectual property. And the United States is ready to assist Vietnam as it works to fully implement its commitments. I want you to know that, as President of the United States, I strongly support TPP because you'll also be able to buy more of our goods, "Made in America."

Moreover, I support TPP because of its important strategic benefits. Vietnam will be less dependent on any one trading partner and enjoy broader ties with more partners, including the United States. And TPP will reinforce regional cooperation. It will help address economic inequality and will advance human rights, with higher wages and safer working conditions. For the first time here in Vietnam, the right to form independent labor unions and prohibitions against forced labor and child labor. And it has the strongest environmental protections and the strongest anticorruption standards of any trade agreement in history. That's the future TPP offers for all of us, because all of us—the United States, Vietnam, and the other signatories—will have to abide by these rules that we have shaped together. That's the future that is available to all of us. So

we now have to get it done, for the sake of our economic prosperity and our national security.

This brings me to the second area where we can work together, and that is ensuring our mutual security. With this visit, we've agreed to elevate our security cooperation and build more trust between our men and women in uniform. We'll continue to offer training and equipment to your Coast Guard to enhance Vietnam's maritime capabilities. We will partner to deliver humanitarian aid in times of disaster. With the announcement I made yesterday to fully lift the ban on defense sales, Vietnam will have greater access to the military equipment you need to ensure your security. And the United States is demonstrating our commitment to fully normalize our relationship with Vietnam.

More broadly, the 20th century has taught all of us, including the United States and Vietnam, that the international order upon which our mutual security depends is rooted in certain rules and norms. Nations are sovereign, and no matter how large or small a nation may be, its sovereignty should be respected, and its territory should not be violated. Big nations should not bully smaller ones. Disputes should be resolved peacefully. And regional institutions, like ASEAN and the East Asia Summit, should continue to be strengthened. That's what I believe. That's what the United States believes. And that's the kind of partnership America offers this region. I look forward to advancing this spirit of respect and reconciliation later this year when I become the first U.S. President to visit Laos.

In the South China Sea, the United States is not a claimant in current disputes. But we will stand with partners in upholding core principles, like freedom of navigation and overflight and lawful commerce that is not impeded and the peaceful resolution of disputes, through legal means, in accordance with international law. And as we go forward, the United States will continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows, and we will support the right of all countries to do the same.

Now, even as we cooperate more closely in the areas I've described, our partnership includes a third element: addressing areas where our governments disagree, including on human rights. I say this not to single out Vietnam. No nation is perfect. Two centuries on, the United States is still striving to live up to our founding ideals. We still deal with our shortcomings: too much money in politics and rising economic inequality, racial bias in our criminal justice system, women still not being paid as much as men doing the same job. We still have problems. And we're not immune from criticism. I promise you, I hear it every day. But that scrutiny, that open debate, confronting our imperfections, and allowing everybody to have their say has helped us grow stronger and more prosperous and more just.

Now, I've said this before: The United States does not seek to impose our form of a government on Vietnam. The rights I speak of I believe are not American values, I think they're universal values written into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They're written into the Vietnamese Constitution, which states that "citizens have the right to freedom of speech and freedom of the press, and have the right of access to information, the right to assembly, the right to association, and the right to demonstrate." That's in the Vietnamese Constitution. So really, this is an issue about all of us, each country, trying to consistently apply these principles, making sure that we—those of us in government—are being true to these ideals.

In recent years, Vietnam has made some progress. Vietnam has committed to bringing its laws in line with its new constitution and with international norms. Under recently passed laws, the Government will disclose more of its budget, and the public will have the right to access more information. And as I said, Vietnam has committed to economic and labor reforms under the TPP. So these are all positive steps. And ultimately, the future of Vietnam will be decided by the people of Vietnam. Every country will chart its own path, and our two nations have different traditions and different political systems and different cultures. But as a friend of Vietnam, allow me to share

my view, why I believe nations are more successful when universal rights are upheld.

When there is freedom of expression and freedom of speech and when people can share ideas and access the Internet and social media without restriction, that fuels the innovation economies need to thrive. That's where new ideas happen. That's how a Facebook starts. That's how some of our greatest companies began, because somebody had a new idea that was different. And they were able to share it. When there's freedom of the press—when journalists and bloggers are able to shine a light on injustice or abuse—that holds officials accountable and builds public confidence that the system works. When candidates can run for office and campaign freely and voters can choose their own leaders in free and fair elections, it makes the countries more stable, because citizens know that their voices count and that peaceful change is possible. And it brings new people into the system.

When there is freedom of religion, it not only allows people to fully express the love and compassion that are at the heart of all great religions, but it allows faith groups to serve their own communities through schools and hospitals and care for the poor and the vulnerable. And when there is freedom of assembly, and citizens are free to organize in civil society, then countries can better address challenges that government sometimes cannot solve by itself. So it is my view that upholding these rights is not a threat to stability, but actually reinforces stability and is the foundation of progress.

After all, it was a yearning for these very rights that inspired people around the world, including Vietnam, to throw off colonialism. And I believe that upholding these rights is the fullest expression of the independence that so many cherish, including here, in a nation that proclaims itself to be "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

Vietnam will do it differently than the United States does. And each of us will do it differently from many other countries around the world. But there are these basic principles that I think we all have to try to work on and improve. And I say this as somebody who's about to leave office, so I have the benefit of almost 8 years now of reflecting on how our system has worked and interacting with countries around the world who are constantly trying to improve their systems as well.

Now, finally, our partnership, I think, can meet global challenges that no nation can solve by itself. If we're going to ensure the health of our people and the beauty of our planet, then development has to be sustainable. Natural wonders like Halong Bay and Son Doòng Cave have to be preserved for our children and our grandchildren. Rising seas threaten the coasts and waterways on which so many Vietnamese depend. And so as partners in the fight against climate change, we need to fulfill the commitments we made in Paris, and we need to help farmers and villages and people who depend on fishing to adapt and to bring more clean energy to places like the Mekong Delta. This is a rice bowl of the world that we need to feed future generations.

And we can save lives beyond our borders. By helping other countries strengthen, for example, their health systems, we can prevent outbreaks of disease from becoming epidemics that threaten all of us. And as Vietnam deepens its commitment to U.N. peacekeeping, the United States is proud to help train your peacekeepers. And what a truly remarkable thing that is: Our two nations that once fought each other now standing together and helping others achieve peace as well. So in addition to our bilateral relationship, our partnership also allows us to help shape the international environment in ways that are positive.

Now, fully realizing the vision that I've described today is not going to happen overnight, and it is not inevitable. There may be stumbles and setbacks along the way. There are going to be times where there are misunderstandings. It will take sustained effort and true dialogue, where both sides continue to change. But considering all the history and hurdles that we've already overcome, I stand before you today very optimistic about our future together. And my confidence is rooted, as always, in the

friendship and shared aspirations of our peoples.

I think of all the Americans and Vietnamese who have crossed a wide ocean, some reuniting with families for the first time in decades, and who, like Trinh Công Son said in his song, have joined hands, and opening their hearts and seeing our common humanity in each other.

I think of all the Vietnamese Americans who have succeeded in every walk of life: doctors, journalists, judges, public servants. One of them, who was born here, wrote me a letter and said, by "God's grace, I have been able to live the American Dream. . . . I'm very proud to be an American, but also very proud to be Vietnamese." And today he's here, back in the country of his birth, because, he said, his "personal passion" is "improving the life of every Vietnamese person."

I think of a new generation of Vietnamese—so many of you, so many of the young people who are here—who are ready to make your mark on the world. And I want to say to all the young people listening: Your talent, your drive, your dreams—in those things, Vietnam has everything it needs to thrive. And your destiny is in your hands. This is your moment. And as you pursue the future that you want, I want you to know that the United States of America will be right there with you as your partner and as your friend.

And many years from now, when even more Vietnamese and Americans are studying with each other, innovating and doing business with each other, standing up for our security and promoting human rights and protecting our planet with each other, I hope you think back to this moment and draw hope from the vision that I've offered today. Or, if I can say it another way—in words that you know well from the Tale of Kieu—"Please take from me this token of trust, so we can embark upon our 100-year journey together."

Cám on cac ban. Thank you very much. Thank you, Vietnam. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:11 p.m. at the National Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Buddhist monk and peace activist Thích Nhat Hanh; and Ngô Bao Châu, Francis and Rose Yuen Distinguished Service Professor of Mathematics, University of Chicago.

Remarks and a Panel Discussion on Entrepreneurship at the DreamPlex Coworking Space in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
May 24, 2016

The President. Thank you. *Xin chào.* Thank you very much. Thank you. Well, it's wonderful to be here in Ho Chi Minh City. Please have a seat.

I just had the opportunity to visit the Jade Emperor Pagoda. And I think going from a 100-year-old sacred temple to this 21st-century DreamPlex is, I think, a wonderful expression of the evolution that's taken place here in Vietnam, a country that honors its history, but is also boldly racing towards the future.

And that's also the story of this city. This is a city on the move. And we could see as we were traveling in from the airport all the activity that's currently taking place. And I'm not just talking about the traffic—[*laughter*]—although I do think it might be easier to be on a motorbike than a motorcade. [*Laughter*]

But this city, like its—this country, is full of energy. You can see it in the skyscrapers shooting above the horizon and the shops that are springing up in every corner. You can see it online, where tens of millions of Vietnamese are connecting with each other and with the world. And you can feel it here at DreamPlex, where ideas are becoming a reality. I just had the chance to see some of those ideas in action: young people who are making things happen. I saw a virtual game that can help people recover from nerve injuries, to a machine that lets your smartphone control a laser cutter, al-

though you have to be careful with the laser cutter where you point it. [*Laughter*]

But some of this energy may be due to your famous *cà phê trứng*. That stuff is strong, I understand. But the real driver of Vietnam's growth, and the engine of Ho Chi Minh City, is the spirit of entrepreneurship, the spirit that brings us here today.

And I see it everywhere I travel all around the world. I meet people—and especially young people, like the three that we're about to meet—who are eager to strike out on their own, start something new, and shape their own destinies. Many want to do more than just create a great new app for a phone. They want to contribute to their communities and help people live better lives.

And that's what entrepreneurship is all about. It's building businesses, making a profit, hopefully. But it's also about creating good jobs and developing new products and devising ways to serve others. Entrepreneurship is also the fuel for prosperity that puts rising economies on the path to success. It's what gives young people like so many of you the chance to channel your energy and your passion into something that is bigger than yourselves. And it allows us to come across countries and cultures to solve some of the world's greatest challenges.

Of course, being an entrepreneur is not easy. It's not easy in the United States; it's not easy here in Vietnam; it's not easy anyplace in the world. It can be tough to get started. It's hard to access capital. It's hard to get the skills that you need to run a business. You might not always have the mentors and the networks that can help guide you along the way. And it can be especially difficult for women, for others who traditionally are not viewed as being at the center of business life in a country, haven't had all the access to the same opportunities.

So we've got to tap all the talent that's out there. Just because you are born poor does not mean you should not be able to start a business. Just because you don't look like the traditional businessman doesn't mean you can't make a great product or deliver a great service.

And that's why DreamPlex is so important. It's not only a home for digital entrepreneurs like you, it's also a place where you can share ideas and work together and build a community that supports each other.

And incubators like this allow Vietnam, alongside its emphasis on entrepreneurship, to see more startups happening in this country than ever before. Recently, in 1 year alone, the funding for startups doubled in this country. And we're seeing major acquisitions, like Fossil Group's takeover Misfit Wearables, a Vietnamese company that makes devices like fitness trackers. We're seeing Vietnamese Americans who are coming here to start new ventures, and that shows the strong bond between the United States and Vietnam.

And the world is taking notice. A leading global venture capital firm called 500 Startups just launched a $10 million fund here in Ho Chi Minh City. Next month at our Global Entrepreneurship Summit—something that I've been hosting now for several years—I'll welcome eight Vietnamese entrepreneurs to Silicon Valley so that they can learn from some of the best entrepreneurs and startups and venture capitalists in the world. And your success sends a message to global investors about this country's incredible potential for innovation. Hopefully, it also encourages other Vietnamese entrepreneurs to chase that new great idea and start that new company, which will continue to fuel a ever-expanding Vietnamese economy.

I'm here today because the United States is committed to being a partner as you grow. With the Peace Corps coming to Vietnam for the first time, our volunteers are going to help more Vietnamese learn English, the language that so often is used in the global economy. With programs like our Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative, we're helping give thousands of young people across Vietnam the skills and networks they need to turn their ideas into action. With our U.S.-ASEAN Connect initiative, we're matching American investors with Vietnamese entrepreneurs in areas like clean energy. With the women's entrepreneurship center we're going to open here in Vietnam—WECREATE is

what we're going to call it—we'll help empower the next generation of women business owners.

And if we really want to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation, I should mention that we need to move ahead with the Trans-Pacific Partnership, because TPP will not only let us sell more of our goods to each other and bring our economies closer together, it will accelerate economic reforms here in Vietnam, boost your economic competitiveness, open up new markets not only for large companies, but also for small and medium-sized businesses. It will raise labor and environmental standards, and it will improve business conditions so that entrepreneurs like you can thrive.

So my message to all the entrepreneurs here today is that I believe in you, America believes in you, and we're going to keep investing in your success. Ultimately, it's the inventors and dreamers, people like those that I just met, those that we'll about—we'll hear from soon, and all of you in the audience who are going to shape Vietnam's future for decades to come.

So I'm looking forward to hearing from these outstanding young leaders. Thank you very much. *Cám on.*

Entrepreneurship

So I'm just going to introduce very quickly these outstanding young businesspeople who are leading the way here in Vietnam. We invited them here to give us some of their thoughts about what would make it easier for them to start their businesses and to continue to nurture the startups that they're involved with.

The first is Khoa Pham, who is the director of legal and corporate at Microsoft Vietnam. We have Lê Hoàng Uyên Vy, who is the founder of Adayroi, which is aiming to become the Amazon of Vietnam. And we have Do Thi Thúy Hang, who's the vice president of Seedcom, which invests in Vietnamese companies. So please give them a big round of applause, and we'll start our conversation.

So, Vy, let's start with you. And tell us—it sounds like you started being interested in business at a very young age.

Adayroi Founder Lê Hoàng Uyên Vy. Good evening, Mr. President. And good evening, everyone. First of all, I'd like to say thank you to the Vietnamese and U.S. governments for organizing such a wonderful event. My name is Vy, and I graduated from Georgetown University in 2009, majoring in finance. Actually, I have a passion for technology since I was in school. When I was 13, I decided to start my own web design company. And I love the idea of connecting buyers and sellers through an online platform, just like eBay or Amazon.

But at the moment, I was so young, and I couldn't start a formal business. So therefore, after my college graduation, I decided to come back to Vietnam and started chon.vn. It's an e-marketplace selling fashion items. And luckily, after 5 years, we became one of the top destination for fashion lovers in Vietnam. And we got acquired by the biggest conglomerate in Vietnam, called Vingroup. And right now I'm running adayroi.com. Basically, we're the Amazon of Vietnam. We sell everything from electronics to even groceries online. And our goal is to bring the safe and high-quality products at affordable price to every family in Vietnam.

The President. That's great. The—now, you look very good. Is this some of your fashion that you can sell online? [*Laughter*] Is that like you can buy the necklace and the earrings?

Ms. Vy. Yes, available on adayroi.com. [*Laughter*]

Women Entrepreneurs

The President. Okay. So I just wanted to—so if you're looking for a good deal—[*laughter*].

Ms. Vy. Thank you.

The President. Excellent.

The—and, Hang, you started out as an investor—or as an entrepreneur. Now you're an investor as well. Tell us what have been the challenges that you've met. And have there been some special challenges about being a woman entrepreneur and investor here in Vietnam?

Seedcom Vice President Do Thi Thúy Hang. Thank you, Mr. President. It's my honor to be here as well. And I guess let's take it back a little bit. I came back to Vietnam 5 years ago after 9 years in the States. So America is truly my second home. And when I came back, it was

basically because of my very close ties with Vietnam. My family has been here; my hometown is here; I love the people here. Because the environment has been very supporting; I've learned a lot from previous generations. And certainly, because I have seen successful role models here, and that's why I came back.

I never thought that being a female entrepreneur would be a disadvantage here in the local market, because from my experience and observations around the area, I'm very proud to say that in Vietnam women are treated equally and given a lot of opportunities. So whether we try or not is—starts within ourselves. And we see a lot of women entrepreneurs in the room as well. Chang from Misfit, that you just mentioned, she's incredible. Rena, she's not an entrepreneur, per se, but she has done a terrific job here in Ho Chi Minh City. We all love her. [*Laughter*]

So if the world is run by women—and I'm hinting at the United States election this year—it would be a better place. Like you always say. You always say that.

The President. I do. [*Laughter*] So the—what kind of businesses are you looking to invest in at this point?

Ms. Hang. So Vietnam is among the top exporters of agricultural products in the world. Yet there are a lot of untapped opportunities in agriculture. And it is still a very low-tech, low-productivity sector. And at Seedcom, we've worked with a lot of companies across retail, technology, and logistics. But the project that we're most excited about at the moment is in agriculture, Cau Dat Farm. We apply technology to traditional farming, very simple stuff like from tracking to automation. And basically, we bring the products all the way to end users at a higher value.

So that signals, I guess, the next wave in innovation in Vietnam, where entrepreneurs and investors come together, using technology to tackle very traditional problems in traditional industries. And we are really, super excited about it.

Microsoft Corporation/Vietnam-U.S. Business Cooperation

The President. Excellent. So the—Khoa, you were born here, moved to the States when you were 11. Is that right?

Microsoft Vietnam Director of Corporate, External and Legal Affairs Khoa Pham. That's right.

The President. And got your education there, worked in Washington, ended up at a very—an impressive startup called Microsoft—[*laughter*]—and so now are here representing Microsoft in Ho Chi Minh City. Tell us about, what are the opportunities that Microsoft is seeing, and how you think U.S. companies can most effectively interact with Vietnamese businesspeople and startups and entrepreneurs.

Mr. Pham. Well, welcome to Vietnam, Mr. President. I know it's early morning in Washington, DC——

The President. I've gotten over the jetlag.

Mr. Pham. So I'm glad you're awake.

The President. I'm fine. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Pham. So I returned to Vietnam for the same reason that my parents had when they took me out of Vietnam as a young boy, and that is that they wanted me to have an opportunity for a better life. And we found that in the U.S. And after 35 years living in the U.S., I decided to return to Vietnam to give the same opportunity and to make a difference to the young people of Vietnam. Many of them are sitting here today.

And so the way I look at my return is that Microsoft gives me the opportunity to make a difference, to improve lives for people through the use of technology, as well as to accelerate the development of the country through technology by the improvement of their ICT infrastructure. So I see a lot of impressive, young entrepreneurs and the spirits of entrepreneurship here in Vietnam. And that's the reason I returned to Vietnam.

Digital Commerce

The President. Good. So, Vy, you were mentioning how you want to be the Amazon of

Vietnam. Tell me about the challenges you have in trying to build a digital platform for commerce here in Vietnam and what makes it different trying to develop that here than it might be in the United States, where, obviously, there's more digital platforms and penetration. I'm assuming that, particularly if you want to reach rural areas, that some of the logistical challenges are different. So tell us what has been some of the hardest aspects of building on your vision and how do you think both the Vietnamese Government or the U.S. Government or companies that are interested in working with you or other entrepreneurs, how they can be most helpful. Where do you see the biggest roadblocks?

Ms. Vy. Thank you, Mr. President. I'm very fascinated about building—bringing convenience and modern lifestyle to Vietnamese people. So imagine that working moms has a job from 6 to 9—to 9 to 6, and then after 6 p.m., she has to rush to the supermarket to shop for her home dinner, it would probably take her an hour to get home and then ready to cook for the family.

The President. Because the traffic is——

Ms. Vy. Right, the traffic jam. [*Laughter*] So basically, imagine that one day she can sit in her office and order all the ingredients, and when she gets home, the ingredients will be ready for her to cook dinner for her family. So every day, we can save her an hour to spend more time with her family. Imagine that we can save her 360 hours per year, which translates to 7,300 hours over 20 years, which is equivalent to almost a year. So we can save a woman a year over 20 years. So that's our dream.

The President. Right.

Ms. Vy. But basically, it's very challenging because even online grocery in America is difficult because of the infrastructure. It's very, very difficult for us to get the items to the customer on time, and especially, we have a commitment to deliver it within 2 hours, which is quite impossible when we first started. But then, we are very committed. So we built our own delivery infrastructure; we built our own delivery men. And up to now, I think we have the feeling of it so we are able to deliver our product as fast as we can to satisfy the customers.

So a couple of challenges that I think either the Government in Vietnam or the U.S. Government can help us is, first, is to help us to develop our infrastructure: the logistics, the payments, et cetera, and bring new technology to Vietnam. So that's always been my dream.

Infrastructure

The President. Right. So the—one of the challenges is just making sure that you have the physical infrastructure so that you can deliver fast enough. But in terms of the digital infrastructure, is that well developed, because everybody has a smartphone now?

Ms. Vy. It's much, much better now because people are getting used to using their smartphone to order things online. Three years ago, when I first started, it was so difficult to get people online. But now it's very easy. But still—so the operational infrastructure is not there yet, so we need to learn it from successful companies like Amazon, or we need to come up with our own solution in Vietnam. Because the street in Vietnam is not the same in the U.S. You understand, right? So we have all the delivery men in motorbikes. And they have to know their way around. It's very difficult to install GPS for the delivery men.

Access to Capital

The President. Yes, yes. And just one last question. In terms of access to capital, the—typically, are startups here financed—self-financed or are they financed through the banks? Is there enough of a sort of a bank infrastructure for small businesses and medium-sized businesses? Or are you using—are most entrepreneurs using family savings? Is there venture capital? How are people getting started?

Ms. Vy. Well, that's a very good question. To be honest, I think in Vietnam, it's very difficult to get early funding. Especially, there's not that many venture capital funds here in Vietnam. For seed funding and angel investors, very limited. I think most of the investors in Vietnam,

they want to invest in companies that have track records, which is quite a challenge for a startup in Vietnam. So we have family startup here. It's a good news for us. And we hope that in the near future, more venture funds can come to Vietnam, especially from America, to help us grow all of the business—all the new businesses.

Agriculture

The President. Well, I'm trying to do some advertising for you here. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Vy. Thank you very much.

The President. Hopefully, somebody is paying attention back in the United States.

So, Hang, you were talking about agriculture. Obviously, a large portion of Vietnam is still dependent on basic agricultural—and small farmers. Is the goal here for them to be able to move their products to market at a better price and more quickly? Or is it that you want to move up the value chain so that there's more processing that's taking place, so it's not just rice or other crops, but it's also the products that are derived from the foodstuffs that are being grown? Or is it all of the above? Tell me a little bit more about how you see the opportunity for agriculture to accelerate here in Vietnam.

Ms. Hang. I guess all of the above. Of course, by ourselves, we cannot change the whole industries, but with many investors and entrepreneurs working together, we believe we that can make a positive impact. So as I mentioned, there are two parts in our business. One is to apply more technology in agriculture. Some technology is just very, very simple: using text message, using simple tracking tools, simple automation on the farm, greenhouse, et cetera. That improves the productivity massively, and that helps directly the farmers to increase their output and, as a result, their income.

And secondly, basically, have a trusted brand and add more value and bring the products to the end users at a higher price. And obviously, the result of that is also higher income. And we understand that there are a lot of challenges like Vy mentioned. The logistics is not there yet, quite yet. The infrastructure, there is still a lot to do. But we have a very young team in Dalat, in—where our farm is. And we have lot of—I know personally a lot of people, young people who are—who start their work in agriculture. And we have so much passion and energy and drive, and beyond that, we even have a strategy and action plan to make this happen. So hopefully, in the next few years, you'll see some very positive change in agriculture in Vietnam.

U.S. and Vietnamese Entrepreneurship/Microsoft Corporation

The President. Excellent. The—so, Khoa, when you think about business here versus business as you're accustomed to seeing in the United States, what are some of the big differences? And are there particular areas where you think a strategic investment would really make a big difference in helping all these startups take off? And in terms of Microsoft's strategy, is—are your main clients large businesses and just helping them with respect to IT, or are you also working with some of these smaller startups to see how you can grow their businesses and, hopefully, help them really take off?

Mr. Pham. I'm sure you have heard from Satya Nadella, our CEO. Our company mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more. And I think there is no better market to do that than in Vietnam, because of the young entrepreneurs that we have here and the Internet penetration, the mobile base that we have here with young people. And I think that in terms of capturing the opportunity, I think that's important for us to look at—for our government—and businesses and entrepreneurs to really balance the opportunity and the responsibility in this new world that we live in, which is the mobile-first, cloud-first world.

And so if you look at the challenges in that respect, I think public policy, regulatory environment, it needs to be more conducive, right? Would be—need to be modernized to address the digital economy. And I think that Vietnam is not unique in that space as a developing

market. I think in the U.S., the same is being faced with how do we deal with e-commerce, cross-border taxation issues, and things of that nature. But I think that Vietnam can leapfrog other markets and seeing and capturing that opportunity.

And for Microsoft Vietnam, in particular, we have a national empowerment plan that basically mirrors the Government ICT master plan by 2020 to really develop Vietnam as an ICT-advanced nation. And so, in that regard, we look at the three key pillars, which is the ICT infrastructure of the country, helping really secure the cybersecurity apparatus of the country, really looking at the issue of privacy, data protection, the ICT infrastructure for a national cloud—to really take advantage of that.

And also, our investment, in the second pillar, which is about small and medium-sized enterprises, I think that is going to be the driving factor for the economic growth of this country. We have about 500,000 SMBs, businesses here in that size, and so I would say that the startup community is also the micro businesses that are starting out. And we have programs that provide free software, free cloud services to these startups. So this way, they can really focus on developing the best products.

And then, honestly, the education side, we really have to look at capacity building, and that is to really help the Vietnamese move from a labor-intensive economy into more of a knowledge economy, knowledge-based economy. And that is really getting them with the right skill set for ICT skill sets, and also, we need to really invest a bit more on STEM education. And we're doing that—and teaching with technology in the classrooms and really doing a lot of these startup community, coworking space, community events to really promote coding, because I think that's where it's—that's very important. And I think you were in the K.L. when we did the Hour of Code and where you worked with the Prime Minister and coding with the children. And I think that's something we do here annually as well. Yes.

Education

The President. Absolutely. The—I think that's a great point, and, Vy and Hang, maybe you want to talk about this a little bit. Ultimately, what makes startups and entrepreneurs successful is good ideas and the human capital. Obviously, investors are important, and infrastructure is important, but the most important thing is people. And when you look at Vietnam right now, it seems as if a culture of entrepreneurship is really beginning to grow. But one of the questions that I always have to ask myself in the United States is whether our education system is equipping our children effectively enough to be able to move forward on their ideas.

So you're both very young, so you can still remember what it's like to go to school. [*Laughter*] For me, it's—I've forgotten. But I will say that when I was going to school, we didn't have computers. Well, you had these big mainframe computers—[*laughter*]—but you didn't have personal computers. [*Laughter*]

So, how do you see the education system here adapting to the needs of this new 21st-century economy?

Ms. Vy. Sorry. I still remember taking entrepreneurship classes in the U.S., and I found it so helpful for me to learn about how to write a business plan, how to pitch to an investor, how to develop financial models. And I think when I got back here, I don't find that many entrepreneurship classes in Vietnam. So I think that there's an empty area that we can tap on.

The President. Right.

Ms. Vy. And secondly, I think after your startups get funding, I think they also need mentorship program. Those are the things that really helps the startup community here in Vietnam. And I also think that—I used to be an exchange student. I came to U.S. when I was 17. And I'm very thankful for that because I learned so much about innovations, and I learned how to dream big and always hope for a brighter future. So I think there's a chance for us to also create exchange programs, not just for students, but for working adults. Especially, we can send young startups to do on-

the-job training or internship programs at some U.S. company. So those are the things that I really wanted to get to the audience.

The President. Good. Hang.

Ms. Hang. I would like to add to what Vy just said, as the power of technology. Again and again, I go back to this point. With technology, really, students nowadays have access to a lot more information, a lot more well informed, and education opens a new sector for startups to come and basically try to disrupt the sector. So our friend—[*inaudible*]—he has his own startup, education startup. Another friend that we know very well, Tú, she launched ELSA, that helps students to learn English through an app. So all of those examples you can see that technology basically just opens the doors and opens opportunities for Vietnamese students for access to global knowledge.

And the evidence of that is, most of the team that I work with in Vietnam, from my previous startup, and even at many companies, at Seedcom right now, they all educated in Vietnam. I'm one of the very lucky few that got years of education in the States. But I respect my colleagues a lot every day for—they're so smart. They learn in Vietnam. They learn not only by going to school, but also by doing, by talking to older people, and obviously, learning from the Internet. So I do think technology is changing education.

Telecommunications Infrastructure/Education

The President. Well, Khoa was talking about leapfrogging. One of the things that you're seeing in countries all around the world is, if they hadn't already developed a telephone infrastructure with cellular—or with landlines and telephone poles and underground tunnels, now, suddenly, they just go straight to cellular towers and smartphones. And banking is done there, and commerce is done through phones. And so they've leapfrogged over the infrastructure requirements of old systems.

And the same is true with education. Right? The—if done properly, the opportunity for online education that is much cheaper, but is still of high quality, that can accelerate the ability of a child here in Vietnam to learn coding, learn business practices and so forth, without an expensive education or having to study overseas is hugely important. And with our contribution through the Peace Corps, through entrepreneurship summits, through the sponsorships that we're getting various companies to engage in, our hope is, is that we'll be able to provide the kind of training to young people that will be incredibly powerful for them in the future.

And we want to thank the Vietnamese Government for their cooperation, because a lot of these systems that we're trying to build we could not do if it were not for the strong support that we're receiving from them.

But any other closing thoughts that you think either the President of the United States—[*laughter*]—or the President of Vietnam or any of these business leaders here should hear about?

Public Service/Entrepreneurship

Ms. Vy. Mr. President, let me ask you a question. [*Laughter*]

The President. Oh, sure. [*Laughter*] The tide has turned. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Vy. So when you were a kid, did you dream of becoming President one day?

The President. No. [*Laughter*] I think there are some people who, they had a very clear vision for themselves. I really didn't—I was not as well organized as all of you when I was young. I think it wasn't until I was in college that I began to develop a sense of wanting to make a difference. And even then, I did not know exactly how I might do it.

I was actually very skeptical of politics because I thought politicians weren't always looking out for the people; that too often, I thought, they were looking out for themselves. So I actually worked in communities to try to hold politicians accountable. That was the first job that I did in nonprofit—the nonprofit sector.

So it wasn't really until, I think, I finished law school that I thought that I might be interested in public service. In fact, I went to law school with my now—is my Trade Representative, our Ambassador Michael Froman. And he

was much smarter than me. [*Laughter*] But it wasn't until I came out of law school that I thought that maybe I might run for office at some point.

But the important point, I think, I want to make is that so many of the young people here today—certainly all of you—Khoa, you sort of qualify as young—I'm not—[*laughter*].

Mr. Pham. Young at heart.

The President. You're young at heart. [*Laughter*] These two are young. You're sort of—you're younger than me. [*Laughter*] But so many of the young people I meet today I think have a different idea of their careers and their lives. I think they're much more sophisticated. I think the Internet has exposed them to a lot more ideas of what they can do. I believe that many young people recognize that the old system where you find yourself a job and then you work in that same job for 30 or 40 years is less likely to be the path for them, because the economy is just changing so quickly.

And so I think there's much more interest on the part of all the young people I meet—certainly here in Southeast Asia, in the States, Africa, Europe, wherever I go—to try to make it on their own and to try to find collaborations with groups of people who are interested in the same things they are and to see if they can make it happen. And I think that's a wonderful thing. It's challenging. I think there's—one of the well-known rules in Silicon Valley is, is that if you haven't failed quite a bit, then you're probably not a very good entrepreneur, because the first idea you have is not always going to work. And you have to be resilient and to be able to learn from your failures as much as your successes.

But I truly believe that this generation is not only being entrepreneurial when it thinks about business, but also entrepreneurial when it thinks about trying to solve social problems, entrepreneurial when it thinks about government and making government more responsive and accountable to ordinary people. And it makes me very hopeful for the future. So okay, yes.

Malia Obama/Vietnam-U.S. Student Exchanges

Ms. Hang. I guess the entrepreneurial spirit is very much ingrained in Vietnamese people, just like for Americans. And you have seen and your staff have seen here the very vibrant start-up and business community here in Ho Chi Minh City. Just imagine how much more it can be if there is more exchange—of knowledge, of capital, technical know-how—between the two countries, U.S. and Vietnam.

And on that note, my question for you would be—[*laughter*]—if your daughter taking a gap year from Harvard College, tell you—tells you next week that she wants to live in Vietnam for a year, what do you tell her?

The President. Oh, I would encourage it. But what I've learned is, is that—my daughter Malia will be 18 next month, and she already doesn't listen to me, whatever I say. [*Laughter*] So the—so if you wanted her to come to Vietnam, I shouldn't be the one to tell her. [*Laughter*] Maybe you should tell her.

Ms. Hang. Sure.

The President. Yes, absolutely. But I—certainly I would recommend students from the States to come and study here as much as I'm encouraging Vietnamese students to come and study in the United States.

I—young people are going to be living in a interconnected world, in a global marketplace. And every business has to think globally. Even small businesses. If you have a good product today, you can reach billions of people if you have a good strategy, you have good marketing, you can handle the logistics. And so the barriers to entry that used to exist where only a Boeing or a GE or a very large company could operate in Vietnam is no longer true. And the same is true for small businesses here in Vietnam. If you have a interesting product that is unique and perhaps is very common in Vietnam, but nobody knows about in the United States, oftentimes, one—some of the best ways to start a business is to take something that is very popular one place, but is unknown someplace else and be the first person to sell that product to—in another country.

So I think part of the education that young people have to have is to understand other cultures and understand other markets. If you're lucky enough to be able to travel, then that's one way to do it. But one of the wonderful things about the Internet is, it gives you an opportunity to learn about another place, even if you can't set foot there. So that's something that I continually emphasize. So, all right.

Last question or comment.

Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement

Mr. Pham. Sure. I have a question. In your opening remarks, you mentioned about TPP, and we didn't have a chance to talk about that. And so TPP is considered a 21st-century trade agreement, dealing directly with the digital economy, talking about the rules of law extending to security and privacy and also cross-border data flow. TPP is very important to Vietnam, and I know that the Vietnamese business community supports it. And as an employee of Microsoft, I can reaffirm that our company supports TPP.

As we look at the latest report published by the U.S. International Trade Commission, that indicates that, fully implemented, TPP will bring about $57 billion into the U.S. economy. But currently, the U.S.—American politics is sort of turning against TPP. So what I'd like to hear from you is, what do you think is going to be—what it takes to pass TPP in Washington, DC? And what will you do in your power to make that happen?

The President. Well, it's a great question. And first of all, just to describe why TPP is so important. What TPP does is, it takes 12 countries along the Asia-Pacific region that represent a huge portion of the entire world marketplace, and it says we're going to create standards for trade and commerce that are fair; that create a level playing field; that have high standards; that encourage rule of law; that encourage protection of intellectual property so if Vy or Hang come up with a great idea, somebody is not just going to steal it off the Internet, but the work that they've put in is protected; that has strong environmental provisions so that countries can't just take advantage of no environmental protection to undercut competitors who are following more responsible environmental practices.

And not only do all the countries who are participating stand to gain from increased trade, but Vietnam, in particular, I think economists who have studied it believe would be one of the biggest beneficiaries.

From the United States perspective, it's a commonsense thing to do because, frankly, our markets are already more open than many of the markets of the countries that are signing up. So Japan, for example, is able to sell a lot of cars in the United States, but has a lot of problems importing beef from the United States. And what we've done is to make sure that a lot of the tariffs that are currently being placed on U.S. exports and U.S. goods are reduced.

And so it will create a better environment for U.S. businesses, particularly because of some of the intellectual property protections, a lot of what we sell today are products of our knowledge-based economy. And so it's a smart thing to do across the board.

Now, the problem in the United States around trade—and this is not new, this has been true for the last 30 years—is that some of the previous trade agreements did not have enforceable labor protections or environmental protections. I think when China came in to the WTO, it was able to take advantage of the growing global supply chain, and a lot of manufacturing shifted to China in a very visible way. So a lot of Americans saw companies close and saw what they viewed as their jobs being exported to China. And some of that happened in Mexico with NAFTA as well.

And so the perception was that this is bad for U.S. workers and U.S. jobs. If you look at the data, then what is true is that some manufacturing jobs were lost as a consequence of trade. On the other hand, other sectors of the economy improved significantly. And overall, it was good for the U.S. economy. But I think that in the design of some of the old trade deals and some of the mistakes that may have been made in the past, people became suspicious of trade and worried that if we do TPP,

then the same pattern will repeat itself, and U.S. will lose more jobs.

My argument is that if you're dissatisfied with the current trading arrangements where tariffs are placed on U.S. goods, but other people's goods are already coming into the U.S., why would you want to just maintain the status quo? Why not change it so that everybody is operating in a fair and transparent way?

And the good news is, is that the majority of Americans still believe in trade and still believe that it's good for our economy. The bad news is, politics in the United States is not always—how would I put it?—reasonable. [*Laughter*] That's the word I'm looking for. [*Laughter*] But I'm confident that we're going to be able to get it done because, in the past when we've negotiated trade deals, even though there's a lot of opposition, at the end of the day, we end up getting it done. Keep in mind that we negotiated a very big free trade agreement with Korea, and even though the Bush administration negotiated it, he didn't get it passed. When I came into office, we—one of the first things we did was, we worked with Korea, we made some small modifications to some of the terms, and we got it done, and it's in force today.

So the argument that I've made and I will continue to make in the United States is that we're not going to be able to end globalization. We have to make globalization work for us. And that means that we don't try to put barriers and walls between us and the rest of the world; but instead, we try to make sure that the world has high standards, treats our companies fairly. And if we do that, I'm confident we can compete with anybody.

So nothing is easy in Washington these days. But despite sometimes the lack of cooperation with Congress, I seem to be able to get a lot of things done anyway. [*Laughter*] It could have been easier. I wouldn't—I would have less gray hair—[*laughter*]—if Congress was working more effectively, but we do have some Members of Congress who are here. That's Congressman Castro and Congressman O'Rourke who are two outstanding young Congressmen from Texas. They're strong TPP supporters, and we're very proud of the work that they've done. So we're just going to have to work hard to convince some of their colleagues. But ultimately, I think we can get it passed.

Well, everybody, I think that if you had any doubt about the outstanding future of Vietnamese entrepreneurs, then all those doubts have been pushed away because of the outstanding presentations by these three individuals. Give them a big round of applause.

Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:20 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative participants Ngô Huynh Ngoc Khánh, Bui Hai An, Nguyen Minh Tuan, Nguyen Ba Hoi, and Nguyen Anh Thi Thu, who presented interactive demonstrations prior to the President's question-and-answer session; and President Tran Dai Quang of Vietnam. Ms. Hang referred to U.S. Consul General Rena Bitter, U.S. consulate in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; and Ngô Thùy Ngoc Tú, chief procurement officer, ELSA. Mr. Pham referred to Prime Minister Najib Razak of Malaysia.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Town Hall Meeting in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
May 25, 2016

The President. Thank you! Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you very much. Well, *xin chào.*

Audience members. Xin chào!

The President. Thank you, Tú, for the excellent introduction and your outstanding work to help more young people in Vietnam get an education. Give Tú a big round of applause for—[*applause*]. It's not that easy introducing the President of the United States. [*Laughter*] Also, because the podium was a little higher than her. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank everybody at the GEM Convention Center for hosting us. I want to thank the Government and the people of Vietnam for the wonderful hospitality that you've extended to me over the past 3 days. I have been deeply touched.

Wherever I travel around the world, obviously, one of my jobs is to meet with government leaders. And these meetings are important. But it means that I spend a lot of time with older people like me. There's a lot of gray hair in the room. [*Laughter*] So one of my favorite parts of the trips I take overseas is to get out of the government offices and to spend time with young people like you. It's fun. It gives me incredible optimism about the future, because all of you embody the energy and the drive that is helping to propel this region to new heights. You make me hopeful about the future of ASEAN, hopeful about the future of the world. And so that's what I want to briefly talk about before I start taking your questions.

As I think all of you know, I have a strong personal connection to this part of the world, to the Asia-Pacific and to Southeast Asia. I was born in Hawaii, spent most of my childhood in Hawaii. But I also spent time in Indonesia as a young boy. My sister was born in Jakarta. So this region helped to shape me. It is also why I really like the food. [*Laughter*] And I have to say that the food I've had since I've been here, I've been really happy with.

Now, as President, a key part of my foreign policy is to deepen our ties with countries and the peoples of Southeast Asia. And we've done that. We've deepened the ties with our allies and our partners. We've engaged more with institutions like ASEAN. We're pursuing the Trans-Pacific Partnership to grow our economies and to support jobs in our countries. Together, we're promoting peace and encouraging sustainable development. We're protecting our environment and trying to meet shared challenges like climate change.

But government and businesses are only part of the equation. If we're going to meet all of these challenges, we also have to build strong relationships between our people and especially between young people like you and young people in other ASEAN countries.

Keep in mind that here in Vietnam, two-thirds of you were born after 1975. As I often say to young Americans back home, your generation can look at the world with fresh eyes, without some of the old notions, the old habits of a previous generation. And that gives you the perspective and the power not just to help to grow Vietnam, but also to help shape the world.

Thanks to technology and social media, you're the most connected generation in history. I see it in my daughters, who are always on the phone—[*laughter*]—and they have to teach me how to use the phone. [*Laughter*] More than 30 million people in Vietnam, one-third of the population, are on Facebook—just on Facebook. You're posting selfies. [*Laughter*] I know. I was in the gym this morning; people were trying to take selfies. [*Laughter*] You're streaming the latest Son Tùng M–TP hit. [*Applause*] Right? [*Laughter*] But you're also exchanging ideas and learning from each other.

And so this gives you tremendous power. And we need your passion and energy and talents to tackle some of our biggest global challenges, whether it's reducing poverty, to advancing equality for women and girls, to fighting climate change.

Now, even in this digital age, as Tú pointed out, change doesn't happen overnight. It requires that you stay active and involved over the long term. And it requires you to develop some practical tools. And that's why, 3 years ago, I launched the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative, or YSEALI. And the goal is to empower young people like you with the skills and the resources and the networks that you need to turn your ideas into action.

Since we started this, the YSEALI network has grown to more than 67,000 members across all 10 ASEAN countries, including over 13,000 here in Vietnam alone. And we've welcomed more than 350 YSEALI Fellows to the United States, including some of you, with more than 200 coming in the next 6 months.

So a lot of what we do in YSEALI is rooted in the power and importance of education. That's why nearly 19,000 Vietnamese students studying in the United States right now are helping to bring back the kinds of skills and talents that Vietnam will need to continue to grow and develop. It's why, on this visit, we announced a new partnership between American universities like Arizona State and Vietnamese universities to boost training in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine. It's why we announced that, for the first time, the Peace Corps will be coming to Vietnam, with a focus on teaching English.

And it's why we announced that we're moving ahead this fall with Fulbright University Vietnam, right here in Ho Chi Minh City, the country's first nonprofit, independent university. And the goal is to make sure that Vietnamese students, no matter what their background, has access to a world-class education that's rooted in Vietnam's rich culture and fueled by the free exchange of ideas.

And I want to thank Senator—former Senator Bob Kerrey, who is here, who's been one of the key people to help lead this effort. Thank you very much, Bob.

So all these efforts reflect our belief in you: in your ability to keep moving Vietnam forward. And there are some incredible young people who are here who are great examples of the incredible talent and drive of young people in Vietnam today. For example, I see Vietnam's promise in Ngân Dang. Where's Ngân? Somewhere. There you are right there.

So I had a chance to meet Ngân when I welcomed our YSEALI Fellows to the White House. She started as a volunteer—she started a volunteer group to work with street children and orphans and people with physical disabilities right here in Ho Chi Minh City. So far, they've recruited some 450 volunteers, delivered over 7,000 hours of mentoring, built 5 libraries in 2 cities. And that's just one example of the incredible work that's being done by young people right here in Vietnam. We're very proud of you. Thank you. Thank you, Ngân.

Couple other people I want to point out. We've got Loc Le Xuan. Where's Loc?

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. There he is right there. So Loc teaches at Ho Chi Minh City Vietnam National University. He's a researcher at the Pasteur Institute. His dream is to go back to his hometown and open a medical center so he can deliver quality, affordable health care. He also helped start Give2Give, which works with YSEALI members across ASEAN to improve their skills and build stronger networks. So we're very excited about the work that you're doing, Loc. Thank you so much.

I'm going to close with one more story just to give you an example of the incredible work that's being done by young people. Elizabeth Phu is here, I think, and was born here. In the aftermath of the war, Liz and her family became refugees; Liz was barely 4 years old. They packed themselves into a boat; they began a dangerous journey. Pirates ransacked their boat. But they made it to a refugee camp in Malaysia and, eventually, in 1979, to America. With just $20 in their pocket, Liz's parents started to build a new life in California. They taught their children about the importance of education. And after years of studying and hard work, Liz, a proud Vietnamese American, ended up becoming one of my top advisers on Asia in the White House. And we've relied on her for all kinds of incredible policy work that we've done over the last several years.

So Tú, Ngân, Loc, Liz, so many of you—you're already showing that you can change the world to reflect our best values. You're showing that with determination and commitment and optimism and hard work, anything is possible. And that's why I'm so hopeful about the future between the United States and Vietnam; that our relationship will continue to grow deeper and stronger. But I'm also optimistic that you're going to be able to change the region and the world in so many positive ways. So as the great Tran Lap sang, "the path to glory days is getting closer." So *cám on.*

And so, with that, now is the time for me to start taking some questions. I don't know if you've been briefed, but we have microphones

in the audience. I'm going to just call on people, and I'm going to go boy, girl, boy, girl so it's fair. [*Laughter*] If you can keep your questions relatively short so that we can get as many questions as possible. And introduce yourself before you ask the question so we know who you are. Okay? So I'm going to start right here. Yes. And we've got a microphone coming.

Entrepreneurship/Trans-Pacific Partnership/Vietnam-U.S. Trade

Q. Okay, good morning, Mr. President. My name is—[*inaudible*]—from Ho Chi Minh City. And we are a hundred-percent Vietnamese-owned company that produce high-end plastic products and components in the supporting industries. And today it is our honor to meet with the President, and we have an ambition to request for your help. And that is, we would like to be given opportunities to approach the leading enterprises in the United States, especially in the sector of consumer electronics, automotive, and airline industries, and other plastic-related products for supporting industries. And so, under your help, we could be able to join and be the supplier in the direct supply chain. And we are committed to share the values of integrity and accountability. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Well, thank you so much. I—as you know, one of the things that we're really emphasizing is entrepreneurship, the idea of people starting their own businesses, selling goods across borders, creating jobs, creating great products and services. And yesterday I had a chance to meet with a number of young Vietnamese entrepreneurs who are already starting to create digital platforms to sell goods, not just in Vietnam, but also overseas.

This is one of the reasons why we're pushing very hard for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, TPP. Because what that does is, it reduces the barriers between countries for selling their goods and services. It gives opportunities not just to big companies, but also to small companies to enter into the global supply chain. It raises labor standards and environmental standards so that all countries are working on a level playing field. And if we can get that done—and the goal is, I think, to try to complete TPP before the end of this year—then that will open up a lot of opportunities and create great confidence among investors here in Vietnam and U.S. companies who are interested in working with young people like you who may have a great idea.

Now, my general rule in all this is not to actually broker deals and sign contracts. [*Laughter*] That's somebody else's job. My job is to make sure that we have the kinds of rules in place that make it easier for businesses to get to know each other, to meet. And one of the things that we're doing with the Vietnamese Government is constantly looking for opportunities for trade missions, for businesses to come and learn about what's going on.

And so what we'll do is, we'll make sure that, through the consulate or through the Embassy, if and when we have U.S. businesses who are coming here to Vietnam and are interested in meeting young entrepreneurs, that you'll have an opportunity potentially to present your ideas and see if you can make a deal. All right? Good luck.

All right, it's a gentleman's turn. All right, this guy, he looks very happy, right here. [*Laughter*]

The President's Leadership Advice

Q. Hello, sir.

The President. Hello!

Q. Yes, my name is—[*inaudible*]. I'm a student in Vietnam National University. I have two questions for you. The first one is that you are a very great leader, and we are young leaders. Do you have any advice that how can we be great like you?

The President. Oh, wow. [*Laughter*] Okay. Now, what's the second question?

Q. Yes, and the second question is, we are young leaders. Do you have any suggestions that how can we have to strengthen the relationship between Vietnam and the America?

The President. Okay, well, the—well, first of all, let me tell you, that when I was your age, I was not as well organized and well educated and sophisticated as all of you. When I was young, I fooled around a lot. [*Laughter*] I didn't always take my studies very seriously.

And I was more interested in basketball and girls. [*Laughter*] And I wasn't always that serious. So you're already way ahead of me. You're doing good.

Whenever I meet with young people and they ask me this question, my most important advice is to find something that you care deeply about, find something that excites you, and put all your energy and effort into it, because the path for everybody is different. Some people are very passionate about education. Some people are very passionate about medicine. Some people are passionate about business.

And so there's no one path to ending up being a leader. People sometimes think that to be a leader you have to be a great—you have to make great speeches or you have to be in politics. But there are a lot of ways to lead. Some of the greatest leaders are people who are behind the scenes. So, for example, in the United States, during the civil rights movement that helped to create opportunities for people like me—because at the time, African Americans couldn't fully participate in society—everybody here has heard of Martin Luther King, but there were all these young organizers your age, people like Bob Moses and John Lewis and others, who were helping go into poor communities and registering voters and getting them active and getting them involved. And they were enormous leaders, amazing leaders, even though they never made big speeches in front of big crowds.

But you have to feel passionate about something. And one of the things that I always tell young people is, don't worry so much about what you want to be, worry more about what you want to do. And what I mean by that is, if you are passionate about your work, then naturally, over time, you are going to rise, and people will admire and respect what you've done. But if all you're thinking about is, I want to be a member of the National Assembly, or I want to be very rich, or I want to be this or I want to be that, then you pay less attention to the actual work in front of you.

And most of the people I meet who are very successful, in any field, are people who just love their work. So Bill Gates, who started Microsoft, he didn't start off thinking, I want to be a multibillionaire. He started off thinking, I really like computers, and I want to find out how I can create really neat software.

And people—I didn't start off thinking I wanted to be President of the United States. When I finally stopped fooling around and I wanted to get serious, what I decided was that I wanted to help people in low-income communities, poor people, have opportunity. And so I went to work in poor neighborhoods in Chicago. And because I was interested in the work, I started asking questions: Okay, how can I get more education dollars for these communities? How can I get better housing built in these communities? And that's when I became more aware of how politics worked. And I started asking questions about how could I have more influence and how could I build organizations that could potentially deliver the things that I was interested in. And that's what led me into politics. But I didn't start off saying I want to be President. I started off saying I wanted to help these people.

So I—so that's my most important advice. Decide what it is that you care about deeply, and then put everything you have into doing that. If you're interested in social media and you want to start a company, then focus on that. And if you're interested in health care for people in villages around Vietnam, focus on that. And if you get good at that, naturally, you'll end up being a leader, and you'll have opportunities to do great things in the future.

All right? Good. Okay, it's a young lady's turn. Here you go, since you got such a—when you've got the paddy hat with the "Thank you, Obama"—see, that was good organizing. So go ahead. [*Laughter*] She came prepared.

Vietnam's Son Doòng Cave/UNESCO World Heritage Site Designation Process/Climate Change

Q. I am. So thank you very much, President, for your very inspiring speeches. My name is—[*inaudible*]. I'm from an organization called Save Son Doòng. So yesterday I literally—[*applause*]—thank you. I literally burst to tears when you mentioned preserving the cave for our children, our grandchildren. That is some-

thing that we have been trying to do for the past few years. So my questions for you is that, because Son Doòng is not just belong to Vietnam, it is a world heritage, how would you, an American leader, a global citizen, preserve it? And you also mentioned that you would like to get back to Vietnam. If you have a chance to visit Son Doòng, would you like to do it on foot by trekking, or would you take a cable car, if unfortunately, there's one?

The President. Well——

Q. And also I have a gift——

The President. You've got a shirt for me.

Q. ——that, it would be my honor if you accept this gift.

The President. Well, that's a beautiful shirt, so——

Q. Thank you so much.

The President. The—well, first of all, I definitely want to go visit the next time I come. And I'm a pretty healthy guy, so I can go on foot. I'm—it's, uh—how long is it? [*Laughter*]

Q. It can take 7 days.

The President. Seven days. [*Laughter*] Okay, I'm good. All right. [*Laughter*] I can do that. Is—are there places to get something to eat along the way—[*laughter*]—or do I have to carry my own food?

Q. We will carry it for you.

The President. Oh, well, no, I'll carry it myself. I'm—yes.

The—well, look, I think that the possible designation of a world heritage site is a complex process. It would involve I think working with the Government of Vietnam, with existing organizations that designate world heritage sites. We'll be happy to work with your organization, with the Vietnamese Government, and others about the possibilities of doing that.

But I do think that one of the great things about your generation is, is that you're already much more conscious about the environment than my generation was or previous generations were. And that's really important not only to preserve beautiful sites in our countries, but also because economic development and the well-being and the health of your people and everyone around the world is going to depend on how we deal with some of these environmental issues.

Now, to some degree, this is not fair, I think it's important to note, because if you think about Western industrial development, before we knew anything about climate change, they used enormous amounts of carbon energy, and we in the United States have a huge carbon footprint and for 100 years or 150 years were helping to warm the planet. So it's not entirely fair, then, to say to countries that are developing now, well, you have to stop because of climate change.

But the problem is, is that if a country like Vietnam or China or India took the same development path that the West did, we're all going to be under water, because the climate is going to warm up so quickly and the climate patterns are going to change, that, in fact, the terrible consequences could actually impede development rather than advance development.

That's why we had this agreement in Paris to have all countries join together to deal with climate change. And what it says is, is that each country at different stages of development has different obligations. The United States, we have to do more. Countries like China that are large have to do more. But everybody has to do something. And we all have an obligation then also to help developing countries find new paths for energy and development that are environmentally friendly, developing clean energy strategies that can leapfrog over the old, dirty industries and immediately go to the clean industries.

Now, the good news is, I think that can happen. Because if you think about—everybody here has a cell phone, I assume, right? Everybody has a smartphone? Yes, you do. Of course, you do. [*Laughter*] Well, in many countries like Vietnam, you didn't start off with a lot of phone towers and digging and laying telephone lines under the ground. You've leapfrogged the old technologies and immediately went to a cellular technology and a wireless technology. Well, the same that we're—same thing that we're doing with communications, that's what we need to do with energy.

And so, instead of going through the same energy usage in developing and providing electricity and power, we need to start immediately finding cleaner energy sources, which can create jobs and businesses and opportunities all throughout this region. And I'm very excited about the possibilities of doing that.

So we have to think about beautiful areas that need to be preserved. But we also have to recognize that no matter how well we preserve one or two areas in each country, if the overall climate patterns change radically, then we're all going to be in a really difficult situation. And you're already starting to see the effects of climate change here in Vietnam. I think this country is going to be one of the most affected. And in someplace like the Mekong Delta, you have drought on the one hand, but you also have saline intrusion on the other hand. And that could have a huge impact on Vietnam's ability to feed its people, on fishermen, on farmers. And it could be a really, really big problem if we don't do something about it. So it's going to be up to you to start, and I'm going to want to partner with you to make that happen.

Thanks for the T-shirt also.

All right, so let's see. Oh, you've got flags and everything. [*Laughter*] Gentleman right here.

The President's Young Leaders Initiatives/The President's Plans After Leaving Office

Q. Good morning, President Obama. My name is Tan Phát. I'm from SIT Study Abroad, which brings American students to come to Vietnam to learn. So my question is that, as you said earlier, YSEALI is your initiative, and I know that you want to leave the White House very soon, so I'm wondering, when you leave, how you—do you come up any plans to handle for the next President to maintain this very good idea? Thanks.

The President. Well, it's a great question. Yes, this is something that we're already planning. Our expectation is, is that the next President will want to continue the incredible work that we've done with the YSEALI. It's not just, by the way, young people in Southeast Asia that we're doing this with. We have a Young African Leaders program that involves young people from 50 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. We have a Latin American version that brings young people together. And at some point, we're going to bring key leaders from each of these areas so that they can start learning from each other.

And our hope is, is that the State Department will continue this program. But one of the things—people always ask me, what am I going to do after I leave the Presidency. Because I'm still relatively young—not compared to you, but I'm—compared to other Presidents, I'm pretty young. And I don't know everything that I'm going to do, but the one thing I do know I will continue to work on is developing young leaders in the United States and around the world. So, in addition to my hope that the next President continues the program through the State Department, I'll make sure that through my philanthropy and my own work that we're continuing to bring young people together so that we can start building the kind of talent that knows each other and is networked and is connected and is learning from each other. Because that's what it's going to take for countries in the future to be able to solve these big problems.

If you ask me what I'm most excited about in terms of my legacy 20 years from now, I would feel really good if I see 10,000 or 20,000 or 50,000 young leaders who are now taking over governments and businesses and nonprofit organizations, and they now know each other from different countries, and they've worked together, and they've built trust, and they've built relationships. And if I can help facilitate that, that would be something that I'd be very proud of. So you can guarantee that I'll continue to work on this. Good.

All right, yes, right here. Oops. Is it working? Mike ready? Here we go, switch it up.

Q. My name is—[*inaudible*]—hello, hello?

The President. Uh-oh. I might—you might end up needing to use mine.

Q. Oh! Hello?

The President. All right, it's working?

Q. Yes.

The President. Oh, okay, there you go. Just in time. [*Laughter*]

Q. Good morning, President Obama. I'm a YSEALI Academy Fellow, 2015, in the University of Montana.

The President. Excellent. How do you like Montana?

Q. It's not cold, it's too hot.

The President. Oh, it's very cold. You just haven't—what, have you gone through January yet?

Q. Summer batch, luckily.

The President. When did you get there?

Q. June to August.

The President. Well it's not—yes, it's not cold in June and August. [*Laughter*]

Q. Luckily.

The President. You just went there at the right time. But it's a beautiful State, isn't it?

Q. Yes. I love it.

The President. Yes, it's lovely. You—some gorgeous mountains. Have you learned how to fish?

Q. Yes.

The President. Fly fishing?

Q. Yes. I went rafting as well.

The President. And rafting also.

Q. Yes.

The President. That's great.

Vietnam's Mekong Delta/Association of Southeast Asian Nations/The President's Plans After Leaving Office/U.S. Politics

Q. So my topic is about global environmental issues. So I'm going to make my professor in Montana happy by asking a question related to climate change——

The President. Good.

Q. ——and environment. So, in the Mekong region, there a lot of hydropower dams are being built on the mainstream of the Mekong. And this problem is not easy because we have big countries and small countries related to the hydropower building in the area.

The President. Yes.

Q. So do you have any suggestions for all the governments of the Mekong region to get together and sustain the interests, both economic and environmental interests in region?

And just one more question.

The President. Yes. [*Laughter*]

Q. It's like a very typical job interview. Where do you find yourself in 5 years? [*Laughter*] Because I think it's a very interesting period when Malia probably graduates from Harvard University and you still struggle with computer or iPhone 10. [*Laughter*] And also that's when probably maybe Mr. Sanders or Mr.—Mrs. Hillary or maybe Mr. Trump finish his—their President's term. So what—where do you find yourself and the world in 5 years? Thank you.

The President. Well, the—first of all, on the Mekong Delta, we actually, through ASEAN and the East Asia Summit, created a Mekong Delta working group with all the countries that are impacted. And we're, through our State Department and various programs, we're working to help them plan and create sustainable development across countries.

Now, you're right that one of the big challenges is how do you deal with water resources and the building of dams and hydropower. And that's not a problem that's unique to the Mekong Delta. You see this in a lot of parts of the world where big projects get built with unintended consequences, and it has severe effects downstream. And the results in some cases have been not great. And have had significant environmental degradation because of lack of planning.

So what we're going to try to do is to continue to work with the affected countries and to provide them with the technical assistance and the evaluations of what needs to happen, what they need to watch out for. And hopefully, that information is power. That information then can be used to negotiate on an international level to try to prevent some projects that might have very bad effects.

But one of the things that we've seen in ASEAN is, when small countries band together as a unit, then their power is magnified. That's true on economic issues; that's true on environmental issues; that's true on security issues. And we've seen, since I was President—since I became President, I think, a greater willingness of the ASEAN countries to do more

substantive work. It used to be, I think, ASEAN would meet, and everybody was very polite, but you didn't always have, I think, as many specific, concrete plans of action. And now you're starting to see, I think, ASEAN being used as a much more effective tool for policymaking, and the environmental area is a critical place where that can happen.

In terms of where I see the world in 5 years, some of you are going to be doing great things, and I'll be very excited to find out what you're doing. I suspect that I'm going to be doing the kinds of work that I'm—that I've been doing all my life. I'll be doing organizing work and involved in public policy issues. But I just won't be doing it in a formal way through elected office. I'll be like a community organizer, except a little more famous than I used to be. [*Laughter*]

In terms of American politics, I tend to be positive and optimistic about American politics. I think sometimes other countries look at our election system, and we think—and people think, wow, what a mess. [*Laughter*] But usually, we end up doing okay because the American people are good people, and they have—as I hope you've met, you've gotten to know people in Montana—the American people are generous, and they're decent, and they're hard working. And sometimes, our politics doesn't express all the goodness of the people. But usually, eventually, the voters make good decisions, and democracy works.

So I'm optimistic that we'll get through this period, and of—one of the great things about the United States is that even when it makes mistakes, I think it's able to adjust and recognize our mistakes, and then we correct course and take different steps. So things are going to be okay, I promise. [*Laughter*]

Go ahead. All right. Let's see, all right. This guy, he has two hands up and a symbol. I don't know what that means, but—[*laughter*]. I don't know, it was interesting, so we'll call on him. Maybe he'll explain it.

Q. Yes, hello.

The President. Hello.

Q. Mr. President. I want to say that you are so handsome. [*Laughter*]

The President. Oh, okay! [*Laughter*] The—well that's—you can just stop there if you want. [*Laughter*]

Q. Okay. The two questions of me—now turn a little bit into business.

The President. Business.

Q. Yes. You told us just find something you are completely care about, and my biggest care about is human resource management or talent management. And now——

The President. Hotel management, did you say?

Q. Talent management.

The President. Talent management.

Q. Yes.

The President. Got it.

Entrepreneurship/Vietnam's Business Environment

Q. Okay, now we are joining AEC and TPP. This mean that, beside opportunities, we have many challenges. The more challenge that—they have many, like, overseas companies, they want to attract Vietnamese talent. And can you give, like, a suggestion? We cannot just base on the patriotism of them to force them to stay in Vietnam. They have a chance to seek for their, like, own development. So how can Vietnamese firms and Vietnam Government can have them stay and contribute to Vietnam? And one more question about entrepreneurship. In the—[*inaudible*]—there is more—like startup company who have a lack of human resource because they move from other countries. And how can the young entrepreneurs can deal with it? Can you give me any suggestion? Thank you.

The President. Okay. The—well, look, if I understood your question—so TPP, you've got these new opportunities. Companies are going to be interested in coming into Vietnam as investors or as business partners with existing Vietnamese companies. And I think that any good foreign company is going to want to partner with a Vietnamese partner who understands the culture, understands the system. They're going to be looking for young talent. And if you start a company that helps to identify talent and is then helping those who are do-

ing business here to recruit, I'm sure that that will go very well.

This is not an area that I'm an expert on, but one of the things that we're seeing is, through organizations like—or companies like LinkedIn—I don't know if you've heard of that—based out of Silicon Valley. But they've been able to build these digital platforms where people are continually updating their résumés and providing their information. And that becomes a powerful tool then for human resource people who are recruiting. And it's conceivable that you could do something equivalent to that in Vietnam in preparation for the ongoing growth and development of businesses here in Vietnam.

So that's a great idea. Good luck.

I—in terms of the question on entrepreneurship, I wasn't clear exactly what your question was. Was it that you think talented Vietnamese are going someplace else instead of staying here? Is that right?

Q. How can Vietnamese firms and Government have policies to keep, to retain the talent?

The President. To retain talent.

Q. Yes.

The President. So you're worried about a brain drain where——

Q. Yes, brain drain, yes.

The President. ——where young Vietnamese, they get an education, and suddenly, they're being recruited to go to Australia or to go to Singapore or to go the United States or China, and then you don't have enough entrepreneurs here.

Well, look, I think the best way to retain talent in any country is to make sure that talent is rewarded. And the way to reward talent is to have strong rule of law; to have a good education system; to have the ability to start a business relatively easily; to make sure that government policies, when it comes to taxation or when it comes to building infrastructure, that those policies are good ones, and so that people feel as if, by staying here, this is the best place for them to make it.

People usually don't want to leave their home countries if they feel like they've got opportunity in their home countries. Usually, they end up leaving if they feel as if they're stuck in their home countries. And so one of the benefits of the Trans-Pacific Partnership is, it's going to lead to the Government taking a series of legal reforms that I actually think will create a better business environment. And it means for young talented people like you, there's no reason to leave because you're going to be in a position to do great things here in Vietnam.

The places that, I think, lose talent where there's a lot of corruption—so no matter how hard you work, you always have to pay a bribe or you've got to hire somebody's cousin to get a license to do something—that ends up frustrating people. I think people feel frustrated if there's not a good education system, because the truth is, is that not only do you need a good education, but then if you want to start a business, you've got to be able to hire people who also have a good education. And so you've got to count on the schools training people properly. You want to have good infrastructure, proper roads, and you want to have proper wireless service in order for you to do business in the 21st century.

Environmental issues are increasingly important. I mean, there are some countries where it's actually hard to recruit people because it's hard to breathe in some of the big cities. Now, you don't want to raise your kids—no job is so important that it's okay if your children have asthma and they can't breathe. Right? And so, interestingly enough, if you want the best talent today, you have to pay attention to quality-of-life issues and making sure that people can have clean air and clean water and they're not being exposed to pollution that may cause cancer and things like that.

So those are all policies that end up making a difference in retaining talent in any country, in any city, in any community.

Good. All right. Okay, well, we've got these young ladies—well, they've got a flag. So since you brought a flag, that's a—I'm very impressed with your planning. [*Laughter*] Those of you with the hats, the flags, it's good organizing.

Human Trafficking/Trans-Pacific Partnership

Q. Hi, my name is Christina, and I'm with my colleague Hoa and some of our other colleagues here. And we work for an American anti–human trafficking NGO called Pacific Links Foundation. So we fight against human trafficking here in Vietnam. With Vietnam emerging as an important player in the TPP, many companies will start to shift their production and factories to Vietnam, which will create a new mobile workforce. With that comes the unfortunate opportunity for human traffickers and labor brokers to take advantage of these workers, such as promising—like, creating false promises or tricking them or even coercing them into moving across borders and therefore forcing them into a situation of being trafficked. What is the United States Federal Government doing to prevent human trafficking in the global supply chain?

The President. Well, first of all, this is a——

Q. Before you answer, can I ask you a question? Yes.

The President. I'm sorry, I didn't know——

Q. Yes, because we come—we had the same comment——

The President. You're a tag team, I've got you.

Q. Yes, yes. Okay. Thank you. So, dear President, what should I ask you for now? Because, before I came here—two, couple months, I asked many when I—whenever I met someone, I also asked what should—what do you want to ask if you can meet the President? And a lot of questions and a lot of comments. And for now, I forgot everything. But this flag is remind me about a Kenya friend—she's lawyer and very smart, and she said that—we see you, so you go meet, because she said that I say—should he come to Kenya—President, and she said I do. If you can ask, please, Obama about human trafficking prevention strategy. Thank you. Yes.

The President. Okay. All right. Well, the—let me see. You lost my train of thought. [*Laughter*] No, look, the issue of human trafficking is something that we have made a top priority in our State Department and the United States Government. So we have an entire set of policies designed specifically to work with countries to prevent human trafficking. And we've actually begun making progress in improved enforcement, in improved law enforcement coordination. NGOs have been very helpful as partners with us in identifying what are some of the paths where people are being exploited.

With respect to TPP, it's precisely because we put such an emphasis on this that we actually have provisions in TPP designed to prevent human trafficking. And it's actually given us leverage to work with some countries to say, if you want to be part of TPP, you have to have a better system in place to prevent human trafficking, including some of these cross-border migrant worker situations.

So, when I was in Malaysia, for example, meeting with Prime Minister Najib, one of the most important topics as we were negotiating TPP was, how could we do more work in order to protect people who are being brought in—whether it's working at the palm oil plants or what have you—so that there was better tracking, better enforcement, better protections for people? And that's in the actual agreement.

Now, I think that an agreement on paper is never enough, so there have to be systems in place to monitor what's taking place. And these human traffickers are very clever. They're like drug traffickers. If you cut off one path, then try to take another path, and they're always looking to exploit people who are desperate. So this is why this can't just be a government initiative or a law enforcement initiative. It has to be something where we're partnering with NGOs, human rights organizations. We have to be very nimble in how we adapt to changing circumstances so that we're constantly shutting down some of these pathways.

Having—the last thing I'll say, though, is one of the best ways for us to reduce human trafficking is to provide more opportunity for people, particularly in rural areas throughout Southeast Asia. And if we can give young people in villages a chance to make a living and get an education, and if we particularly focus on women and girls—because a lot of human traf-

ficking results from the fact that girls are not given the same educational opportunities as boys, and as a consequence, they find themselves in very desperate situations—the more we can change those dynamics, that will also reduce the ability of people to exploit people who have no hope or think that they have to leave their village and are vulnerable then to claims that if you just come with us you're going to be able to get a great job and everything is going to be okay. And then, by the time they get there, they suddenly find themselves trapped in a very bad situation.

So congratulations on the good work you're doing. I'm very proud of you. Thank you.

All right, how much more time we've got? We've only got time for one more question? All right, I'll take two more questions. But it's a guy's turn first. I'm going to call on this guy just because I kind of like the little—the yellow in his hair there. All right, I like the style. [*Laughter*] There you go.

The President's Childhood/U.S. Declaration of Independence

Q. Hi, thank you. My name is—[*inaudible*]—and I'm a filmmaker, so I'm very interested in personal stories. And as you said before, when you are young, you're like—love fooling around. And I read on Internet—I'm not sure if true or not—that you also like smoking weed and things like that. [*Laughter*] So I wonder——

The President. I don't know if that's true, but—[*laughter*].

Q. I wonder what makes you from that guy, become a guy who care about the society. Because, like, a lot of places, many—I think many young Vietnamese people, they still love, like fooling around——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——and they don't really care about the society. But this must be something that makes you become this person. So thank you.

The President. Well, it's a good question. I wrote a book about this called, "Dreams From My Father." I think it was translated into Vietnamese, but I don't know if it's still in bookstores near you. You know, you never know exactly why something inside you clicks and you decide to take a different path.

I think, for me, when I was young—because my—I didn't know my father, and I didn't grow up with him in the house—my grandmother's—or my grandparents and my mother raised me. And they were very loving and very generous. But I think I rebelled in part because I felt that something was missing. And as I got older, I realized that instead of worrying about the father who wasn't there, I should worry more about what can I do and take more responsibility for my own life.

And that led me to start studying more, and it led me to start thinking about social issues more. I grew up. And why it took me until I was 19 or 20, where some other people like many of you have always been very organized—like this young lady, I'll bet she's always been, like, very focused—you don't know why.

And—but I think your point about stories is good. One of the things that I've learned about being a leader is, sometimes, we think people are motivated only by money or they're only motivated by power or these very concrete incentives.

But people are also inspired by stories. The stories they tell themselves about what's important and about their lives and about their country and about their communities. And I think if you want to—in whatever field you're in, whether it's business or politics or nonprofit work, it's worthwhile to listen to other people and ask them questions about the stories that are important to them, because oftentimes, you'll find their motivations. And when we come together to do important things, it's usually because we've told a good story about why we should be working together.

You think about the United States of America. We have a really good story called the Declaration of Independence. "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal; that we're endowed with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." That's a wonderful story. There's no—when the Declaration was made, there really was no United States. It was just a good story that they were

telling about what could be. And then, people were attracted to that story. And it led to independence, and it led to immigrants from around the world who wanted that vision for themselves. It led Ho Chi Minh to adapt it when Vietnam was trying to declare independence. It inspired movements around the world.

So yes, the stories we tell each other are very, very important. And good luck on making your movies. Don't believe everything you read on the Internet though. [*Laughter*]

Okay, last question. All right, oh, this young lady, she stood up, and she's, like, "Hey!" I couldn't say no to her. She had her hand up. I thought she was going to hit me if I didn't call on her. [*Laughter*] Go ahead. I'm teasing.

Importance of the Arts/Freedom of Expression

Musician Hàng Lâm Trang "Suboi" Anh. Hi. So I am a rapper here——

The President. Oh, you're a rapper?

Suboi. ——in Saigon, Vietnam.

The President. Oh, yes?

Suboi. So you have spoken a lot about environment and, like, politics and economic progress of Vietnam. But as an artist, we have a lot to say.

The President. Okay.

Suboi. We have a message to send. I want to know how important it is for a nation to really help and promote their art and culture, and help it—to help its nation in the future.

The President. Okay. The—before I answer your question, why don't you give me a little rap? Let's see. Let's see what you've got. Come on. Do you need, like, a little beat? Badoom, badoom. [*Laughter*]

Suboi. Yes, I do, actually. [*Laughter*]

The President. No, no, go ahead. Come on.

Suboi. Vietnamese or English?

The President. In Vietnamese, of course.

Suboi. In Vietnamese?

The President. I mean, I—the—I won't know what it means, but——

Suboi. Okay.

The President. ——just a short version, because I've got to get going. Go ahead. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, Suboi performed a rap in Vietnamese, and no translation was provided.*]

Suboi. My name is Suboi, by the way.

The President. Well, that was good. See there, that was pretty good. What were you just rapping? What was your verse there?

Suboi. I was just talking about some people having a lot of money, having big houses, but actually, are they really happy?

The President. Hmm. Okay.

Suboi. So yes, a lot of things that people look at us and see, like, different things and something they assume, or a lot of, like, stereotypes, like, you know, like, me, a Asian rapper, it's like looking at a cute girl. People don't know——

The President. Is that what they think? [*Laughter*]

Suboi. But for Vietnamese people, it's different. They think rapping is not, like, for women.

The President. Ahh. Well, that's true in the United States too. [*Laughter*] No, no, what—I just mean that there's always been sort of sexism and gender stereotypes in the music industry like every other part of life.

But to answer your question, look, the arts are important. Artistic expression is important. It's what I was just saying to the filmmaker about stories that we tell each other. Music, poetry, representations of life as it is and how it should be—those are the things that inspire people. Life is a combination of very practical things. Right? You've got to eat, you've got to work, you've got to build roads and make sure that the—some dam isn't ruining a community. But it's also the spirit that we have inside of us and how is that expressed and what are our vision and what are our ideals for the future and how do we want to live together and how do we treat each other.

And one of the most important things about art is, it teaches you to not just think about yourself, but it puts you in the head of other people. So you start realizing somebody else's pain or somebody else's hopes. And you start realizing that we have more in common. So if I read a novel by somebody in Africa, now, suddenly, I understand more about how we are

similar. And if I listen to a Vietnamese rap, and it connects to the things that I'm feeling, now I feel closer to a country on the other side of the world. And that's how we build understanding. And that's how we end up being able to work together and plan together and build a better future together.

So look, let's be honest. Sometimes, art is dangerous though. And that's why governments sometimes get nervous about art. But one of the things that I truly believe is that if you try to suppress the arts, then I think you're suppressing the deepest dreams and aspirations of a people.

And one of the great things about the United States, for all of our flaws in a lot of areas is, is that we do give much greater expression to our culture. And something like rap, which started off as an expression of poor African Americans, now, suddenly has become a global phenomenon and is really the art form of most young people around the world today in a lot of ways. And imagine if, at the time when rap was starting off, that our Government had said, no, because some of the things you say are offensive, or some of the lyrics are rude, or you're cursing too much. Then, that connection that we've seen now in hip-hop culture around the world wouldn't exist.

So you've got to let people express themselves. That's part of what a modern, 21st-century culture is all about.

All right, everybody. I'm—I've got to go, but this has been wonderful. Thank you so much. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:07 a.m. in Pollux 1 and 2 at the GEM Center. In his remarks, he referred to Ngô Thùy Ngoc Tú, cofounder and board member, Yola Institute; musician Nguyen Thanh "Son Tùng M–TP" Tùng; White House Director for Southeast Asia, Oceania, and East Asian Security Affairs Elizabeth M. Phu and her father Frank Phu; civil rights activists Robert P. Moses and Rep. John. R. Lewis; and William H. Gates III, founder, technology adviser, and board member, Microsoft Corp. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng. A participant referred to Sen. Bernard Sanders, former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Donald J. Trump, chairman and president, Trump Organization, in their capacity as Presidential candidates.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan and an Exchange With Reporters in Shima City, Japan
May 25, 2016

Prime Minister Abe. At the very outset of our small-group discussion, I firmly lodged a protest against President Obama as the Japanese Prime Minister with regard to the most recent case in Okinawa. The entire time for the small-group discussion was spent on this specific case in Okinawa. And I feel profound resentment against this self-centered and absolutely despicable crime.

This case has shocked not only Okinawa, but also deeply shocked the entire Japan. I conveyed to the President that such feelings of Japanese people should be sincerely taken to heart. I also urged the United States to make sure to take effective and thorough means to prevent a recurrence and vigorously and strictly address the situation.

In proceeding with the realignment of the U.S. forces without truly staying together with the feelings of the people in Okinawa, we will not be able to make progress. And there is a tough and challenging road ahead of us as we seek to regain confidence, which was lost due to the most recent case. However, we both agreed to do our utmost in areas such as impact mitigation in Okinawa through Japan-U.S. cooperation.

At the plenary meeting, for myself, I conveyed to the President that I wholeheartedly welcome the decision by President Obama to visit Hiroshima, a place which suffered an

atomic bomb. And he is going to visit the Hiroshima as the first-ever U.S. President.

I am convinced that when the leader of a nation that is the only nation to have used a nuclear weapon and the leader of the nation that is the nation—only nation to have suffered atomic bombings in the war express the feelings of sincere sorrow and pray for the repose of the souls of those citizens who sacrificed their life will create a significant and strong momentum toward the world free of nuclear weapons.

Japan and the United States, together, working hand in hand and continuously doing utmost for global peace and prosperity, I would like to send such a powerful message from Hiroshima together with President Obama.

So tomorrow, finally, the G–7 Ise-Shima summit is starting. We could compare notes how we, the G–7, can lead the world in addressing various challenges of the international community, including the global economy, which has become increasingly uncertain, and also the challenges against the international order.

In particular, the global economy is going to be the biggest theme for the G–7 Ise-Shima summit. And both President Obama and I could share the recognition that G–7 should lead the global sustainable and powerful growth. My determination is to demonstrate in a thorough manner a way forward toward resolving various challenges of the international community, through the close cooperation between Japan and the United States.

Japan and the United States, working hand in hand for regional and global peace and prosperity, based on our enduring bond and also under our alliance of hope, that is the determination that I could renew, together with President Obama today.

[*At this point, the moderator spoke in English as follows.*]

Moderator. Now, let me invite the President of the United States.

President Obama. Well, I want to thank Prime Minister Abe and the people of Japan for welcoming us. Prime Minister Abe and his team have done an outstanding job preparing for the G–7 summit. And we discussed, as Shinzo indicated, the need for us to continue to boost global growth and to move ahead with the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The alliance between the United States and Japan is a critical foundation for the security of both of our countries. That alliance has also helped to fortify peace and security throughout the region.

As Prime Minister Abe indicated, we did discuss the tragedy that took place in Okinawa, and I extended my sincerest condolences and deepest regrets. And the United States will continue to cooperate fully with the investigation to ensure that justice is done under the Japanese legal system.

We also discussed a range of regional issues, and given the threat from North Korea, we agreed to continue reinforcing deterrence and strengthening our defense capabilities. On maritime issues, we are united in upholding freedom of navigation and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

We also discussed a range of global issues, including the need for additional resources to help migrants and refugees and to support Iraq. And we discussed the role our countries should play in achieving the early entry into force of the Paris climate change agreement.

Finally, I'm looking forward to the opportunity to visit with some of our American and Japanese military personnel to thank them for their service. And our visit to Hiroshima will honor all those who were lost in World War II and reaffirm our shared vision of a world without nuclear weapons, as well as highlight the extraordinary alliance that we have been able to forge over these many decades.

[*The moderator spoke in English as follows.*]

Moderator. Thank you. Thank you, the President. Now, let us have the questions from the floor. I would have two questions, one from Japanese side, the other one from the United—you Americans' side. The—let me appoint the questioner, and then let me defer to my American counterpart to appoint the U.S. question. And when the—we appointed, please make

sure that you are—the names and media outlet. And—[*inaudible*]—question.

[*The moderator spoke in Japanese, and no translation was provided.*]

Q. This is—[*inaudible*]—from NHK. I would like to ask a question to Prime Minister Abe with regard to the most recent, very tragic case in Okinawa. I understand that more than 20 years have already passed since the rape incident, which involved U.S. Marine Corps officers back in 1995. But even so, we do not see the decreasing number of crimes involving the U.S. people. And it is quite regrettable a trend. And whenever Japan faces each of the case or accident, I understand that the Japanese Government has been requesting the U.S. side to take measures to prevent the recurrence of the—such measures. And also, you have been dealing with the situation through the improvement of the implementation of the SOFA instead of having amendment to the SOFA itself. And I am aware of the fact that your judicial systems are quite different of—between Japan and the United States.

So my question to the Prime Minister is that whether or not you have requested to the President that we should have the revision or amendment to the SOFA. And also, in order for you to see the progress in the base-related issues, I understand that the key is to regain the confidence among the people in Okinawa, as well as ensuring safety and security among those of the people in Okinawa. So what specific measures are you planning to implement as you move forward?

Prime Minister Abe. I too feel profound resentment. When thinking of fear and real disappointment of this victim, I am just speechless. We will investigate in a vigorous manner under the Japanese jurisdiction, in mind with the Japanese laws, this offender who committed this self-centered and absolutely despicable crime.

With regard to the Japanese investigation process, during our discussion, President Obama assured me that the U.S. side will offer full support as we move forward. The entire Japan was deeply shocked due to this most recent case. And as I said earlier, for myself, I conveyed to the President that such feelings of the Japanese people should be taken to heart sincerely. I also requested that the United States vigorously and strictly address the situation, including making sure to take effective and thorough measures to prevent recurrence.

On the status of forces agreement, when facing issues, we will steadily realize the visible improvement in concrete terms as for each and every issue that we face. And by doing so, we will achieve results, one after another, in a steady manner, in parallel with such steady efforts. My view is that we both make efforts and persistently pursue the most appropriate form of the regime, based on the status of forces agreement and related arrangements.

As a result of the case in Okinawa, people in Okinawa feel strong sense of uneasiness in light of their security situation. My intention is to thoroughly implement measures to prevent crimes and ensure safety and peace of mind among the people in Okinawa. So I already gave the instruction to my Chief Cabinet Secretary to consider such measures in a timely manner.

Securing lives and property of the Japanese people is my responsibility as Prime Minister. I am determined to take every possible means so that such tragic case is never to be repeated.

White House Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz. Christi Parsons with the Chicago Tribune.

Alleged Rape and Murder Committed by Former U.S. Servicemember in Okinawa, Japan/U.S. Diplomacy/Use of Military Force/China-U.S. Relations/South China Sea Maritime Disputes

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President and Mr. Prime Minister. Mr. President, on this trip you are confronting old war zones and the use of American military might in them. This week, you also crossed into sovereign Pakistani territory, where you did not have permission to operate, in order to kill the leader of the Taliban. After expanding the use of the drone program as you have, are you worried at all about handing it over to the next President? Could I also ask what your response is to the Chinese

warnings this week that the U.S. and its partners in this region may be creating a tinderbox that would lead to regional conflict?

Mr. Prime Minister, if you would also reflect on that, I would appreciate it. Could you also tell us a little bit about what you think the President's visit to Hiroshima means to the Japanese people? And will you also consider a trip to Pearl Harbor, sir? Thank you.

President Obama. Before I answer your questions, Christi, let me just touch on the points that were made earlier about the Okinawa case, because this has shaken up, I think, people in Okinawa as well as people throughout Japan.

I want to emphasize that the United States is appalled by any violent crime that may have occurred or been carried out by any U.S. personnel or U.S. contractors. We consider it inexcusable. And we are committed to doing everything that we can to prevent any crimes from taking place of this sort. And that involves reviewing procedures and making sure that everything that can be done to prevent such occurrences from happening again are put into place.

I think it's important to point out that the SOFA—the status of forces agreement—does not in any way prevent the full prosecution and the need for justice under the Japanese legal system. And we will be fully cooperating with the Japanese legal system in prosecuting this individual and making sure that justice is served. And we want to see a crime like this prosecuted here the same way that we would feel horrified and want to provide a sense of justice to a victim's family back in the United States.

So I think the Japanese people should know how deeply moved we are by what has happened and our intention to make sure that we're working with the Japanese Government to not only prosecute this crime, but to prevent crimes like this from happening again. Go ahead.

[*President Obama paused while his remarks were translated into Japanese by an interpreter. He continued his remarks as follows.*]

Christi, with respect to your broader question, I wasn't entirely clear on the parallel you were trying to draw. As Commander in Chief and President of the United States, my job is to protect the American people. I wish that never involves us having to take military actions. That's not the world we live in.

Obviously, there are very few parallels between the deployment of 500,000 troops to Vietnam and us taking strikes against terrorists who are trying to kill our troops who are stationed in Afghanistan or potentially carry out actions in the homeland.

But I think that what might be a useful lesson to draw from the trip that I just took to Afghanistan—or to Vietnam, rather, is the extraordinary opportunities that have presented themselves through the diplomacy that we've been engaged in over the last 7 years, and the fact that former adversaries are now working in partnership to provide economic opportunities to both of our peoples, to expand trade and commerce, to educate those remarkable young people that were in the town halls that we met today. And I am investing enormous amounts of time and energy and resources into those kinds of diplomatic initiatives because, to the extent that they're successful, that shrinks areas of conflict, reduces the necessity of engaging in military action.

But at the end of the day, it is still going to be a dangerous world, and there are going to still be times where our U.S. fighting forces have to be deployed or have to take actions. And we have to do so in a way that is prudent, that is proportional, and that is mindful of the fact that any kinetic action, no matter how targeted and how justified, also can create tragedy. And one of the things that I hope to reflect on when I'm at Hiroshima—and certainly, something I reflected on when I was in Vietnam—is just a reminder that war involves suffering, and we should always do what we can to prevent it.

But, as I said early on in my Presidency when I was in Oslo for the Nobel Peace Prize, I am the President of a nation that at times is threatened by very real risks, not imaginary risks, and it's important for us to act on occasion in order to make sure that the American people are protected.

[*President Obama paused while his remarks were translated into Japanese by an interpreter. He continued his remarks as follows.*]

My answer sounds so much longer in translation. [*Laughter*] So the—just very briefly, on China. Our growing partnership with Vietnam is happening entirely independent from China and is based on mutual interests to expand trade, to expand cooperation across a whole range of areas, and is 30 years in the making now. So the fact that China would perceive that as some sort of provocation to them, I think, says more about Chinese attitudes than it says anything about our attitudes.

The tensions between China and Vietnam or China and the Philippines or China and other claimants in the South China Sea are not of our making. And we would very much like to see a peaceful resolution of those disputes. What's preventing that from happening is not anything we're doing. We would welcome China and Vietnam having a conversation and being able to resolve those disputes. We're not taking a position on those claims. So it's entirely within China's power to resolve those disputes. And our goal with respect to our own interests in the South China Sea is simply to maintain freedom of navigation, freedom of overflight, and the maintenance of international rules and norms because we think that benefits everybody, including China.

Prime Minister Abe. With regard to China, we certainly welcome the peaceful rise of China. And what we have been advocating for vis-a-vis the situation in this region is as follows, namely, three-pronged principles. First, if you are to make a claim you have to make a claim based on international law. And also, second, you should never intimidate others through the use of force or coercion, or you should not unilaterally change the status quo. And third, you should settle the disputes in a peaceful manner in accordance with international law.

With regard to President Obama's visit to Hiroshima, I'd like to touch on this. Seventy-one years ago, back in 1945, two atomic bombs were dropped. And in Hiroshima, numerous number—numerous citizens sacrificed their lives, and even now there are those of us suffering because of the atomic bombing. And what those Japanese people's suffering from the atomic bomb desiring is never to repeat such tragedy in the world. And I understand that the upcoming visit by President Obama to Hiroshima will no doubt create further powerful momentum toward realizing a world free of nuclear weapons.

At this moment, I don't have any specific plan to visit Hawaii. However, last year, when we marked the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, I made an official visit to the United States. During my visit to the United States last year, I had an opportunity to deliver a speech to the joint Houses of the U.S. Congress. And on that occasion, I sincerely reflected on the past and expressed my sincere sense, and also, I highlighted the facts that former adversaries are now transforming into the relationship of allies, as the United States and Japan—as we stand at this moment. And also, during my visit to the United States, I had a chance to visit the Second World War Memorial, where I laid a wreath to pray for the souls of the—all the war dead.

So as we move forward, I am determined to work closely with the United States in addressing various challenges of the international community based on our robust alliance, namely the alliance of hope between Japan and the United States. Thank you.

Moderator. Now, let us wrap up the joint conference. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 10:50 p.m. in the Fujii Room at the Shima Kanko Hotel, The Classic. In his remarks, he referred to Kadena Air Base employee Kenneth Franklin Shinzato, a former U.S. marine who was arrested on May 19 on suspicion of illegally disposing of the body of Rina Shimabukuro in Okinawa, Japan, on April 28. Prime Minister Abe referred to Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga of Japan. Reporters referred to former Pfc. Rodrico Harp, USMC, and former Seaman Marcus D. Gill, USN, who were convicted in the rape of a minor in

Okinawa, Japan, on September 4, 1995; and Akhtar Mohammad Mansur, leader of the Taliban insurgent organization in Afghanistan, who was killed in a U.S. airstrike in Baluchistan Province, Pakistan, on May 22. Prime Minister Abe and a reporter spoke in Japanese, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters in Shima City, Japan
May 26, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody. So, as all of you know, we're going to Hiroshima tomorrow. And in the interest of getting you all home at a reasonable hour, we're not going to be doing a press conference after, so I thought I'd give you guys a chance to fire off some questions now.

Just a quick comment on the G–7 meeting so far: It's been extremely productive. I think that one of the benefits of the G–7 is you have likeminded countries who are committed to democracy and free markets and international law and international norms. And so for us to be able to get together and focus on critical issues that not only affect individual countries, but affect the international order, I think is vitally important. And we very much appreciate the work that the Japanese and Prime Minister Abe have done in organizing an excellent meeting.

So far, we've discussed issues of the global economy and the need to continue to accelerate growth, to use all the tools at our disposal to make sure that we're not only putting people back to work, but also helping to lift wages and helping to make sure that we can sustain the momentum of the recovery that's taking place in the United States most prominently, but also we're starting to see some progress in Europe. The fact that the Greek debt crisis has been resolved for a reasonable length of time, I think, should help. But we've all got a lot of work to do. And we agreed to continue to focus on making sure that each country, based on its particular needs and capacities, are taking steps to accelerate growth.

We had a chance to talk about trade—not only TPP and our involvement in that, but also T–TIP—and recommitted ourselves to making sure that we try to finish those negotiations before the end of the year and emphasized the importance of pushing back against either protectionism or competitive currency devaluations or the kinds of beggar-thy-neighbor strategies that all too often end up leaving everybody worse off.

We began to touch on some of the key security issues that are important to all of us: South China Sea and maritime security; touched on issues surrounding Ukraine, where we've started to see some progress in negotiations, but we're still seeing too much violence, and we need to get that resolved. And we're going to spend some time this evening tackling some of the other major international hotspots.

So that gives you an update of where we're at so far. And with that, I'm just going to dive in, and you guys can ask some questions. And we're going to start with Gardiner [Gardiner Harris, New York Times].

Nuclear Nonproliferation Efforts/North Korea

Q. Mr. President, 11 of your predecessors decided against going to Hiroshima. What do you know that they didn't? What were they worried about that you aren't?

And just sort of generally on nonproliferation—because I think that's your focus and that's obviously a priority for you—how do you communicate risks and concerns about this in a way that would do more to get it resolved? Because it seems to be getting worse. I mean, Americans worry a lot about terrorists with suicide vests, which are unlikely events that can kill dozens. Do they worry enough about the risks of nuclear mishaps or attacks, which are unlikely events that could potentially kill millions instead of dozens? In short, are we paying enough attention to Kim Jong Un and Pakistani tactical——

The President. Right.

Q. ——nuclear weapons, the sorts of things that you know are going on?

The President. Okay. Well, it's a terrific question. First of all, I won't characterize how other Presidents were thinking about these issues. I can tell you how I'm thinking about it, and that is that the dropping of the atomic bomb, the ushering in of nuclear weapons was an inflection point in modern history. It is something that all of us have had to deal with in one way or another. Obviously, it's not as prominent in people's thinking as it was during the cold war, at a time when our parents or grandparents were huddling under desks in frequent drills. But the backdrop of a nuclear event remains something that, I think, presses on the back of our imaginations.

I do think that part of the reason I'm going is because I want to once again underscore the very real risks that are out there and the sense of urgency that we all should have. So it's not only a reminder of the terrible toll of World War II and the death of innocents across continents, but it's also to remind ourselves that the job is not done in reducing conflict, building institutions of peace, and reducing the prospect of nuclear war in the future.

In some ways, we've seen real progress over the last several years. The Iran nuclear deal is a big piece of business, because without us having to fire a shot, we were able to persuade a big, sophisticated country that had a well-developed nuclear program not to develop nuclear weapons. The START II treaty that I negotiated in my first couple of years in office with the Russians has reduced our respective stockpiles. The Nuclear Security Summit and all the work that we've done on that score has made it less likely that nuclear materials fall into the hand of terrorists or nonstate actors.

And although we have not seen the kind of progress that I would have liked to have seen with respect to North Korea, what we have been able to do is mobilize the international community so that their proliferation activities are scrutinized much more carefully and they have far fewer countries that are tolerant of potential actions by North Korea outside of their own program.

Having said that, North Korea is a big worry for all of us. They're not at the point right now where they can effectively hit U.S. targets, but each time that they test, even if those tests fail, they learn something. And it is clear that ideologically they are still convinced that—and Kim Jong Un in particular seems to be convinced that his own legitimacy is tied up with developing nuclear weapons.

You pointed out the continuing tensions that exist in South Asia. That is still a concern. And we know that terrorist organizations would have no compunction about using a weapon of mass destruction if they got their hands on it.

So we've got a lot of work to do. I think we've built up an architecture during the course of my Presidency that has made a difference, that has focused attention on some key points of vulnerability. But we're not where we need to be yet. And obviously, we haven't achieved all the goals that I set when I spoke in Prague at the beginning of my Presidency. Of course, I noted at the time that I didn't expect to be able to achieve all those goals during the course of my Presidency or even in my lifetime. And this is going to be an ongoing task, but it's one that I think we have to be paying a lot of attention to.

Q. Just one follow-up. Mr. Kerry, your Secretary of State, called the North Korean nuclear program the biggest threat in the world right now—the gravest threat. Do you agree with that? Do you see this nuclear program as the worst thing going on?

The President. Well, it is not the thing necessarily that poses the most immediate risk. Obviously, ISIL using rifles and crude bombs can kill a lot of people in a Paris or a Brussels. And people are rightly insistent that the world community stamp out ISIL. So there's a reason why we are focused on that. But this is not a situation where we can afford to just focus on the short term. Over the long term, when you have such an unstable regime that is so isolated, that generally flouts international norms and rules more than perhaps any other nation on Earth, that is also devoting enormous national resources, hell-bent on getting nuclear weapons that they can fire long distances, that

poses the kind of medium-term threat that we have to pay a lot of attention to.

And I assure you, it's something that my administration has paid a lot of attention to. It's something that I think has been at the center of the trilateral work that we've done with our close allies in the region. It's something that we've put at the center of our discussions and negotiations with China. And as I said before, what we've seen actually is improved responses from countries like China, countries in the region, like Vietnam and Burma taking these issues much more seriously because of our engagement. And so that may reduce the risks of North Korea selling weapons or fissile material to other countries, or putting it out on the black market. But it does not, so far at least, solve the core problem of North Korea continuing to develop its program. And we're going to have to continue to work in a concerted way.

In the meantime, I've been working with the Pentagon for several years now on making sure that we can develop the kinds of defense architecture that can protect the United States and our allies from an unexpected escalation.

Carol [Carol E. Lee, Wall Street Journal].

U.S. Presidential Election

Q. Thank you. You've said before that when you talk to world leaders, they often ask you about the Presidential election. Can you give us a sense of the conversations that you've had so far—what they're saying to you, what you're saying to them—particularly now that Donald Trump is the nominee and he recently said that Japan should pay for the U.S. troop presence there? But also, on the Democratic side, what they're saying about that and what you think of that, because it's obviously continuing to be divisive with Bernie Sanders saying he would take it to the convention. And he's endorsed your Democratic Party chair, her primary opponent. Should he change course? Do you—have you decided that you're just not going to get involved until one of them concedes to the other?

The President. Well, look, the world pays attention to U.S. elections. They pay more attention to our elections sometimes than we pay to theirs, because the United States is, as I've said before, at the heart of the international order. And even those countries that are critical of us, even those countries that complain or question particular policy decisions that we make know that ultimately things don't hold together so well if the United States is not making good decisions and count on us to provide a certain level of stability and direction in meeting global challenges.

So they are paying very close attention to this election. I think it's fair to say that they are surprised by the Republican nominee. They are not sure how seriously to take some of his pronouncements. But they're rattled by him—and for good reason—because a lot of the proposals that he's made display either ignorance of world affairs or a cavalier attitude or an interest in getting tweets and headlines instead of actually thinking through what it is that is required to keep America safe and secure and prosperous and what's required to keep the world on an even keel.

With respect to the Democratic primary process, as I've said before, it's been my view to let this play out, let voters make up their minds. And during primaries, people get a little grumpy with each other. It's just the nature of the process. You start off and everybody is thinking, oh, this is fine, this is going to be a friendly competition, we're going to debate ideas. And somebody says one thing, and then another person says another thing, and that felt a little sharper than I expected, and somebody's supporter pops off. And there's a certain buildup of aggravation. We saw that in my lengthy primary in 2008. This is no different.

But what I think is really important to remember is that, unlike what you've seen in the Democratic—or in Republican primary, for the most part there's not that big a difference in—ideologically in terms of the issues. Both Hillary and Bernie believe that every American should have health care. Both of them think that we've got to make college more affordable. Both of them believe that it's important for us to have a tax system that is fair and that we should be closing corporate loopholes in or-

der to pay for things like infrastructure investment and early childhood education.

I mean, if you put their proposals side by side, they're all pointing in the same direction, and the differences are primarily tactical. They had to do with how do you get some of this stuff done. So that doesn't mean that those aren't serious questions to ask and debate. It does mean, though, that once the primary process is resolved, the ability for us to pull together around a common vision that is in sharp contrast to the vision that's being offered on the other side, I think, is one that will get done by the time of the convention.

I would urge—and have urged—both sides to try to stick to the issues, because a lot of that grumpiness arises where folks feel as if we're not talking about an issue, but we're talking about personalities and character. And they're both good people. I know them both well. And I think that it's important for us to try to end this in a way that leaves both sides feeling proud of what they've done. And both sides have run serious, competitive races, and debated issues in a serious way. So I'm proud of Democrats for doing that.

And, Carol, as you know—I sure know, because I've been through this a bunch of times—there is just the natural impulse when you're having to report every day on campaigns that every little blip, speed bump, conflict, trash talking that takes place is elevated, not to mention polls. And the one thing I've learned after being around for a while is, that kind of day-to-day choppiness is not indicative of longer term trends. I feel confident about the Democratic vision for the country, and I feel confident about our ability not just to win elections, but more importantly, to deliver on behalf of the American people and the issues they care about.

Q. Does it going—this going until the end of July make it harder to defeat Mr. Trump?

The President. No. Look, would it be nice if everybody was immediately unified and singing "Kumbaya" and whoever the nominee ended up being could just take a nice 2-week vacation to recharge? Absolutely. I guarantee you that the eventual nominee sure wishes it was over now, because this is a grind. It's hard. And in some ways, it's—one of the things I've always found is that it's a lot more draining arguing against your friends than it is arguing against your political opponents. It just—it weighs on you more. Being criticized by folks who are in your own party always hurts just a little bit more.

And so it takes a little energy out of you. But these are folks who are serious about trying to solve the country's problems. They're both veterans of the political grind. And so they're going to hold up. And by the time we get to the convention, I'm confident they'll be in good shape.

As a special bonus, I'm going to take one more question. Go ahead.

U.S. Presidential Election

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You mentioned some tactical differences between the two Democratic candidates. But when you hear Bernie Sanders speak, it seems like he's talking more about the issue of trustability and the need for a political revolution. And just yesterday we saw the State Department's Inspector General put out a report about Secretary Clinton's e-mails, and it basically undermined some of what she has said about her e-mail practices. I'm wondering if you think that undermines her trustworthiness with the American people, and if you agree with Bernie Sanders that she should release the transcripts of her highly paid speeches to Wall Street.

The President. Okay. You know what, I take it back. I'm not taking another question. [*Laughter*] We're in Japan. Don't we have something in Asia that we want to talk about? I'll be talking about this in Washington the whole time.

Look, I've already said a lot about those issues. I think those are better directed to the campaign. As I said before, during the course of a primary, people say what they think might help them get some votes. And once the campaign is over, then they move on, and they make an assessment in terms of how they can make sure that the vision that they care most deeply about has the best chance of passing a

Congress and getting signed by a President and that Supreme Court nominees are confirmed and all the things that make for a functioning, effective Government.

So I think that the noise that is going on back and forth between the candidates at this point, if you want insights into how they're thinking about it, those should be directed to them.

I'll take——

Q. Can I ask a China question?

The President. You—I'm going to—you've already had a question, so if I'm going to ask another question, I think it's fair to give it to——

Q. That's true. That's true. Yes, sir.

Afghanistan

Q. Can I ask you your thinking on the new Taliban leader and how that affects prospects for peace in the region?

The President. Well, as I was saying to my team, I wasn't expecting a liberal democrat to be the newly appointed leader of the Taliban. So this continues to be an organization that sees violence as a strategy for obtaining its goals and moving its agenda forward in Afghanistan. We have a democratically elected Government in Afghanistan that we're supporting, and our goal right now is to make sure that that Constitution and that democratic process is upheld, not to mention that we're able to maintain the counterterrorism platforms that we need in that region so that Al Qaida and now ISIL are not able to take root and use that as bases to attack us in the United States.

My hope—although not my expectation—is that there comes a point at which the Taliban recognizes that they are not going to simply be able to overrun the country and that what they need to be doing is to enter into serious reconciliation talks that are led by Afghans. And I think if that happens, that's something that the United States and others in the world community would support. But I am doubtful that that will be happening anytime soon. And we'll have to wait and see how those things develop.

In the short term, we anticipate that the Taliban will continue to pursue an agenda of violence and VBIEDs and blowing up innocent people, and the kinds of actions that have characterized their approach over the last 15, 20 years. But I do think that there will come a point, perhaps not this year, next year, but eventually, where there are those within the community that surrounds the Taliban, at least, that recognize, their goals are best achieved by negotiations.

Okay?

The President's Meeting With Dissidents in Vietnam/Burma/Cuba/Human Rights/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. What about those Vietnamese activists that were banned from the meeting——

Q. Right, is that embarrassing that they couldn't show up?

The President. To me——

Q. Yes.

The President. ——or to them? Why is it embarrassing to me?

Q. Well, because you invited these people, and they didn't show up.

The President. Well, I wasn't the one who held them up. Look, I was very blunt with the Vietnamese Government. There is so much good going on in that country, and what I indicated to them is that these kinds of heavy-handed actions end up being entirely counterproductive. And the folks we invited, including those who were there, are people that are prepared to have a constructive conversation with the Government about how to advance peace and prosperity and economic development and environmental security in that country.

And my general message, as you heard at the youth town hall meeting, is harness that talent. Let them loose to create startups and to solve problems and engage them. It's the same message I had with Cuba. It's the same message that I had in a wide range of countries where you still are seeing serious problems with human rights.

The one thing I'm absolutely convinced of, though, is, is that by us engaging, by us meeting with civil society activists, it helps move the ball, it moves the needle. It doesn't solve these problems immediately. Right now Burma/Myanmar is undergoing this democratic

transformation, in part because of the process that we helped to spearhead. They are going through revolutionary changes over the last several years. But I guarantee you that there's still some human rights activists inside of Burma/Myanmar who are being harassed, are not able to speak freely, are not able to assemble the way we would expect them to be able to do in our own country.

When I went to Cuba and I met with those dissidents, one of the individuals who was there still had cuts in his wrists from handcuffs because he had been detained just the day before. I didn't come out of that meeting thinking the problems of human rights in Cuba are solved. But what I'm pretty darn sure of is, is that by us meeting with them, by us shining a spotlight on their stories, by us indicating not that we were going to dictate how these societies develop, but that we do think there are certain universal values that we care deeply about and that we're going to stand with—that that helps.

And that, I think, is the biggest lesson over the course of the 7 years as we've been engaging some of these countries with serious human rights problems. The expectation that I think sometimes we've had that if we just stand back and scold, that somehow that's going to change these internal dynamics has proven to be less effective than us engaging. Indicating to governments that we're prepared to work with them, but that they need to make progress, and continually trying to lift up the actions of these civil society leaders in a way that provides them a little bit more space, and that space slowly grows, and it ends up being a process, and it's not always a process that travels in a straight line. Sometimes, you take two steps forward, you take a step back. Sometimes, you start seeing openings in some of these societies, and then governments get nervous, and they clamp back down.

But that steady pressure, combined with an appreciation of the history of these countries, combined with a willingness to listen, combined with an ability to mobilize the international community so that we're not thinking that we're doing this all by ourselves, over time, we've seen results. More modest than I would hope, but that's true of pretty much everything about foreign policy and domestic policy and the human condition.

All right?

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Speaking of——

The President. Okay, guys. I gave you a couple—I already gave you bonuses. I gave you a bunch of bonuses. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:25 p.m. in the Juko Room at the Shima Kanko Hotel, The Classic. In his remarks, he referred to Supreme Commander Kim Jong Un of North Korea; Donald J. Trump, chairman and president, Trump Organization, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate; former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sen. Bernard Sanders, in their capacity as Democratic Presidential candidates; Haibatullah Akhunzada, leader of the Taliban insurgent organization in Afghanistan; Vietnamese human rights activist Nguyễn Quang A, independent journalist and blogger Phạm Đoan Trang, and human rights defense lawyer Hà Huy Sơn, who were invited to the May 24 meeting with President Obama in Hanoi, but barred from attending by Vietnamese security officials; and Antonio Rodiles, coordinator of the Estado de SATS free speech forum in Cuba. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs). Reporters referred to Rep. Deborah Wasserman Schultz, in her capacity as chair of the Democratic National Committee; Tim Canova, professor, Nova Southeastern University Shepard Broad College of Law, in his capacity as a Florida congressional candidate; and Steve A. Linick, Inspector General, Department of State.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report and Classified Annex on an Integrated Policy To Deter Adversaries in Space
May 26, 2016

Dear Mr. Chairman: (Dear Senator:) (Dear Representative:)

I transmit herewith, in accordance with section 1613 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 (Public Law 114–92), the report and classified annex on an integrated policy to deter adversaries in space.

The report is the result of an interagency process with the objectives to reduce risks to the United States and our allies in space; and to protect and preserve the rights, access, capabilities, use, and freedom of action of the United States in space. Success will require a multi-year effort and commitment across all departments and agencies, and I look forward to your continued support.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John S, McCain III, chairman, and John F. Reed, ranking member, Senate Committee on Armed Services; and W. McLellan "Mac" Thornberry, chairman, and Adam Smith, ranking member, House Committee on Armed Services. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Remarks to United States and Japanese Troops at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Iwakuni, Japan
May 27, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! *Konnichiwa!*

Audience members. Konnichiwa!

The President. Well, it is great to be here. Thank you so much. I've got to tell you, during my visit to Japan, we are reaffirming one of the greatest alliances in the world between the United States and Japan. And I wanted to come by and just say thank you: Thank you to all the men and women in uniform, thank you to your families, because you guys are the backbone of our alliance. Thank you, everybody.

I want to thank Colonel Boucher, also known as Waterboy. [*Laughter*] I want to thank Sergeant Major Garza. I know that we've got a lot of folks in the house. We've got some NCOs. [*Applause*] Staff NCOs. [*Applause*] We've got some officers. [*Applause*] Junior Marines. [*Applause*] Oh, okay. We've got some DOD civilians. [*Applause*] And let's hear it from the family members. [*Applause*]

I want to thank our Japanese friends for joining us: [Vice]* Foreign Minister Kikawada; Mayor Fukuda; Members of the Diet, who are here; Admiral Sonoda and personnel from the Japanese Self-Defense Forces. I also want to thank the wonderful people of Iwakuni City. Your hospitality serving Americans who are far away from home means so much to our Nation. On behalf of all of us, *arigato.*

Now, I'm just going to give some very brief remarks, because I want to shake as many hands as possible. Although, I've got to warn you in advance, no selfies, because then I'll be here all day. [*Laughter*]

But let me just say that, as President of the United States, I have no greater honor than serving as Commander in Chief to our men and women in uniform. You serve and protect the American people. You promote peace and security around the world. And I especially welcome the chance to be with you as we enter into Memorial Day weekend, because it's a re-

* White House correction.

minder of the risks and the sacrifices that are part of your job, and it's a reminder that we can never forget that we have to honor all of those who have given everything for our freedom.

As President, I've made sure that the United States is leading again in the Asia-Pacific, because this region is vital to our shared security and prosperity. And that takes security cooperation. It takes trade agreements. It takes relationships built between people. And it takes the proud service of our men and women in uniform throughout the region, working with our outstanding men and women who serve the armed forces of Japan.

Now, as you know, this afternoon I will visit Hiroshima. And this is an opportunity to honor the memory of all who were lost during World War II. It's a chance to reaffirm our commitment to pursuing the peace and security of a war where nuclear weapons would no longer be necessary. And it's a testament to how even the most painful divides can be bridged; how our two nations—former adversaries—cannot just become partners, but become the best of friends and the strongest of allies.

We see the strength of our alliance on display right here. This base is a powerful example of the trust and the cooperation and the friendship between the United States and Japan. American Marines working side by side with Japanese Self-Defense Forces to protect the peace and engage with our partners throughout the region and assist with humanitarian aid and disaster relief. You've responded to flooding in the Philippines and in Thailand. You've responded to devastating cyclones in Bangladesh. You played a critical role in relief efforts following the 2011 earthquake and the tsunami here in Japan. So, together, you have saved countless lives across the region. And we could not be prouder of that.

Your service, right here, is rooted in the shared values of today's Japan and today's United States: the values of freedom, the values of democracy, the values of human rights, the values of rule of law. And as a result, our alliance hasn't just been essential to the security of our two countries. It's an indispensable source of stability and a foundation for prosperity in this region and around the world. You are the foundation of our quality of life.

So I want to close with an incredible story that captures the essence of our alliance. Where is Captain Tessa Snow? Where is Tessa? You're out here somewhere, I know.

Audience member. Right here!

The President. There she is. Captain Snow is an Osprey pilot, and in the aftermath of the Kumamoto earthquakes last month, she and her squadron flew missions to bring humanitarian aid and supplies to those in need. And one Japanese family was so worried about their house collapsing that they spent several nights outside. Thanks to your efforts, that family and so many others received food and water and the supplies that they needed.

And now this family is expecting a baby—a baby girl—in June. When they heard that Tessa flew the mission that helped save them, they decided to name their baby after Tessa. They want their daughter to grow up with the same qualities that Tessa has: honor and courage and commitment and a willingness to help others.

Aren't those the core values of the Marine Corps?

Audience members. Oorah!

The President. Qualities that, for generations, have defined our men and women in uniform. They're the qualities that represent the very best of our two nations. And because of your service, our shared commitment to human dignity and freedom will endure, and this region will prosper. And we will continue to spread hope wherever we travel. I'm very proud of you. I'm very grateful to our Japanese hosts. I couldn't be prouder of the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces.

God bless all of you. God bless your families. God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:02 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Col. Robert V. Boucher, USMC, commanding officer, and Sgt. Maj. Christopher J. Garza, USMC, sergeant major, Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni; Vice

Minister of Foreign Affairs Hitoshi Kikawada of Japan; and Rear Adm. Naoki Sonoda, commander of Fleet Air Wing 31, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force.

Remarks With Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, Japan
May 27, 2016

President Obama. Seventy-one years ago, on a bright, cloudless morning, death fell from the sky, and the world was changed. A flash of light and a wall of fire destroyed a city and demonstrated that mankind possessed the means to destroy itself.

Why do we come to this place, to Hiroshima? We come to ponder a terrible force unleashed in a not-so-distant past. We come to mourn the dead, including over 100,000 Japanese men, women, and children; thousands of Koreans; a dozen Americans held prisoner. Their souls speak to us. They ask us to look inward, to take stock of who we are and what we might become.

It is not the fact of war that sets Hiroshima apart. Artifacts tell us that violent conflict appeared with the very first man. Our early ancestors, having learned to make blades from flint and spears from wood, used these tools not just for hunting, but against their own kind. On every continent, the history of civilization is filled with war, whether driven by scarcity of grain or hunger for gold, compelled by nationalist fervor or religious zeal. Empires have risen and fallen. Peoples have been subjugated and liberated. And at each juncture, innocents have suffered, a countless toll, their names forgotten by time.

The World War that reached its brutal end in Hiroshima and Nagasaki was fought among the wealthiest and most powerful of nations. Their civilizations had given the world great cities and magnificent art. Their thinkers had advanced ideas of justice and harmony and truth. And yet the war grew out of the same base instinct for domination or conquest that had caused conflicts among the simplest tribes, an old pattern amplified by new capabilities and without new constraints. In the span of a few years, some 60 million people would die: men, women, children no different than us, shot, beaten, marched, bombed, jailed, starved, gassed to death.

There are many sites around the world that chronicle this war: memorials that tell stories of courage and heroism; graves and empty camps that echo of unspeakable depravity. Yet in the image of a mushroom cloud that rose into these skies, we are most starkly reminded of humanity's core contradiction; how the very spark that marks us as a species—our thoughts, our imagination, our language, our tool-making, our ability to set ourselves apart from nature and bend it to our will—those very things also give us the capacity for unmatched destruction.

How often does material advancement or social innovation blind us to this truth. How easily we learn to justify violence in the name of some higher cause. Every great religion promises a pathway to love and peace and righteousness, and yet no religion has been spared from believers who have claimed their faith as a license to kill. Nations arise, telling a story that binds people together in sacrifice and cooperation, allowing for remarkable feats, but those same stories have so often been used to oppress and dehumanize those who are different.

Science allows us to communicate across the seas and fly above the clouds, to cure disease and understand the cosmos. But those same discoveries can be turned into ever more efficient killing machines.

The wars of the modern age teach this truth. Hiroshima teaches this truth. Technological progress without an equivalent progress in human institutions can doom us. The scientific revolution that led to the splitting of an atom requires a moral revolution as well.

That is why we come to this place. We stand here, in the middle of this city, and force ourselves to imagine the moment the bomb fell. We force ourselves to feel the dread of children confused by what they see. We listen to a silent cry. We remember all the innocents killed across the arc of that terrible war and the wars that came before and the wars that would follow.

Mere words cannot give voice to such suffering, but we have a shared responsibility to look directly into the eye of history and ask what we must do differently to curb such suffering again. Someday the voices of the *hibakusha* will no longer be with us to bear witness. But the memory of the morning of August 6, 1945, must never fade. That memory allows us to fight complacency. It fuels our moral imagination. It allows us to change.

And since that fateful day, we have made choices that give us hope. The United States and Japan forged not only an alliance, but a friendship that has won far more for our people than we could ever claim through war. The nations of Europe built a Union that replaced battlefields with bonds of commerce and democracy. Oppressed peoples and nations won liberation. An international community established institutions and treaties that worked to avoid war and aspire to restrict and roll back and ultimately eliminate the existence of nuclear weapons.

Still, every act of aggression between nations, every act of terror and corruption and cruelty and oppression that we see around the world shows our work is never done. We may not be able to eliminate man's capacity to do evil, so nations—and the alliances that we've formed—must possess the means to defend ourselves. But among those nations like my own that hold nuclear stockpiles, we must have the courage to escape the logic of fear and pursue a world without them.

We may not realize this goal in my lifetime. But persistent effort can roll back the possibility of catastrophe. We can chart a course that leads to the destruction of these stockpiles. We can stop the spread to new nations and secure deadly materials from fanatics.

And yet that is not enough. For we see around the world today how even the crudest rifles and barrel bombs can serve up violence on a terrible scale. We must change our mindset about war itself: to prevent conflict through diplomacy and strive to end conflicts after they've begun; to see our growing interdependence as a cause for peaceful cooperation and not violent competition; to define our nations not by our capacity to destroy, but by what we build.

And perhaps above all, we must reimagine our connection to one another as members of one human race. For this, too, is what makes our species unique. We're not bound by genetic code to repeat the mistakes of the past. We can learn. We can choose. We can tell our children a different story: one that describes a common humanity, one that makes war less likely and cruelty less easily accepted.

We see these stories in the *hibakusha*: the woman who forgave a pilot who flew the plane that dropped the atomic bomb, because she recognized that what she really hated was war itself; the man who sought out families of Americans killed here, because he believed their loss was equal to his own.

My own Nation's story began with simple words: All men are created equal and endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Realizing that ideal has never been easy, even within our own borders, even among our own citizens.

But staying true to that story is worth the effort. It is an ideal to be strived for, an ideal that extends across continents and across oceans. The irreducible worth of every person, the insistence that every life is precious, the radical and necessary notion that we are part of a single human family—that is the story that we all must tell.

That is why we come to Hiroshima. So that we might think of people we love: the first smile from our children in the morning, the gentle touch from a spouse over the kitchen table, the comforting embrace of a parent. We can think of those things and know that those same precious moments took place here 71

years ago. Those who died, they are like us. Ordinary people understand this, I think. They do not want more war. They would rather that the wonders of science be focused on improving life and not eliminating it.

When the choices made by nations, when the choices made by leaders, reflect this simple wisdom, then the lesson of Hiroshima is done.

The world was forever changed here. But today, the children of this city will go through their day in peace. What a precious thing that is. It is worth protecting and then extending to every child. That is the future we can choose, a future in which Hiroshima and Nagasaki are known not as the dawn of atomic warfare, but as the start of our own moral awakening.

Prime Minister Abe. Last year, at the 70th anniversary of the end of war, I visited the United States and made a speech as Prime Minister of Japan at a joint meeting of the U.S. Congress. That war deprived many American youngsters of their dreams and futures. Reflecting upon such harsh history, I offered my eternal condolences to all the American souls that were lost during World War II. I expressed gratitude and respect for all the people in both Japan and the United States who have been committed to reconciliation for the past 70 years.

Seventy years later, enemies who fought each other so fiercely have become friends, bonded in spirit, and have become allies, bound in trust and friendship, deep between us. The Japan-U.S. alliance, which came into the world this way, has to be an alliance of hope for the world.

So I appealed in the speech. One year has passed since then. This time, President Obama, for the first time as leader of the United States, paid a visit to Hiroshima, the city which suffered the atomic bombing. U.S. President witnessing the reality of atomic bombings and renewing his determination for a world free of nuclear weapons, this gives great hope to people all around the world who have never given up their hope for a world without nuclear weapons.

I would like to give a wholehearted welcome to this historic visit, which had been awaited not only by the people of Hiroshima, but also by all the Japanese people. I express my sincere respect to the decision and courage of President Obama. With his decision and courage, we are opening a new chapter to the reconciliation of Japan and the United States and in our history of trust and friendship.

A few minutes ago, together, I and President Obama offered our deepest condolences for all those who lost their lives during World War II and also by the atomic bombings. Seventy-one years ago in Hiroshima and in Nagasaki, a great number of innocent citizens' lives were cost by a single atomic bomb without mercy. Many children and many citizens perished. Each one of them had his or her lifedream and beloved family. When I reflect on this sheer fact, I cannot help, but feel painful grief.

Even today, there are victims who are still suffering unbearably from the bombings. Feeling of those who went through unimaginable tragic experiences, indeed, in this city 71 years ago, it is unspeakable. In their minds, various feelings must have come and gone, but of those, this must be in common: At any place in the world, this tragedy must not be repeated again.

It is the responsibility of us who live in the present to firmly inherit these deep feelings. We are determined to realize a world free of nuclear weapons. No matter how long and how difficult the road will be, it is the responsibility of us who live in the present to continue to make efforts.

Children who were born on that unforgettable day lit the light believing in permanent peace. To make every effort for the peace and prosperity in the world, vowing for this light, this is the responsibility of us all who live in the present. We will definitely fulfill our responsibility. Together, Japan and the United States will become a light for hope, for the people in the world. Standing in this city, I am firmly determined, together with President Obama. This is the only way to respond to the feelings of the countless spirits: victims of the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I am convinced of this.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:45 p.m. Prime Minister Abe spoke in Japanese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement—Group of Seven Ise-Shima Leaders' Declaration
May 27, 2016

G7 Ise-Shima Summit, 26–27 May 2016

Preamble

We, the leaders of the G7, met in Ise-Shima on 26 and 27 May 2016 to address major global economic and political challenges. Global growth remains moderate and below potential, while risks of weak growth persist. Escalated geo-political conflicts, terrorism and refugee flows complicate the global economic environment. The rise of violent extremism, terrorist attacks and other challenges, pose serious threat to the existing rule based international order, as well as to common values and principles for all humanity.

The G7 has a special responsibility to lead international efforts to tackle these challenges. We remain bound together as a group guided by our common values and principles, including freedom, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Furthermore, following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the Paris Agreement on climate change last year, we will further make efforts to implement our commitments. Today, we have demonstrated our capacity to make tangible progress on a broad range of economic, security, and development policy issues, and we will demonstrate through our actions, a path forward in solving major issues to ensure peace, security and prosperity of the world.

G7 Ise-Shima Economic Initiative

We pledge to collectively tackle current economic challenges, while laying out foundations for stronger long-term global growth. Therefore, we have developed our commitment in the following areas as our response to contribute to achieve strong, sustainable and balanced growth.

- *World Economy:* Global growth is our urgent priority. Taking into account country-specific circumstances, we commit to strengthening our economic policy responses in a cooperative manner and to employing a more forceful and balanced policy mix, in order to swiftly achieve a strong, sustainable and balanced growth pattern.

  We reiterate our commitments to using all policy tools—monetary, fiscal and structural—individually and collectively, to strengthen global demand and address supply constraints, while continuing our efforts to put debt on a sustainable path. We reaffirm the important role of mutually-reinforcing fiscal, monetary and structural policies, the three pronged approach, to buttress our efforts to achieve strong, sustainable, and balanced growth. We concur on the importance of strengthening our efforts in a cooperative manner to implement our fiscal strategies flexibly to strengthen growth, job creation and confidence, while enhancing resilience and ensuring debt as a share of GDP on a sustainable path, as well as to advance structural reform decisively. We are committed to advancing structural reforms to boost growth, productivity and potential output and to leading by example in addressing structural challenges. We commit to further investment in areas conducive to economic growth, such as environment, energy, digital economy, human resource development, education, science and technology.

- *Migration and Refugees:* The G7 recognizes the ongoing large scale movements of migrants and refugees as a global challenge which requires a global response. We commit to increase global assistance to meet immediate and long-term needs of refugees and other displaced persons as well as their host communities. The G7 encourages international financial institutions and bilateral donors to bolster their financial and technical assistance.

- *Trade:* We are committed to using trade to create economic opportunities for workers, consumers and firms. We reaffirm our commitment to keep our markets open and to fight all forms of protectionism. In order to further boost free trade, we commit to strengthen the rules-based multilateral trading system and promote WTO negotiations. We also encourage trade liberalization efforts through regional trade agreements including the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). We recognize that global excess capacity in industrial sectors, especially steel, is a pressing structural challenge with global implications and this issue needs to be urgently addressed through elimination of market distorting measures and, thereby, enhancement of market function.
- *Infrastructure:* We endorse the G7 Ise-Shima Principles for Promoting Quality Infrastructure Investment to address the global demand-supply gap and strive to align our own infrastructure investment with the Principles. We further encourage the relevant stakeholders, including multilateral development banks (MDBs), to align their infrastructure investment and assistance with the Principles.
- *Health:* We commit to take concrete actions for advancing global health as elaborated in the G7 Ise-Shima Vision for Global Health, highlighting that health is the foundation of economic prosperity and security. We commit to promote Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as well as endeavor to take leadership in reinforcing response to public health emergencies and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) which could have serious impacts on our economies. We also emphasize promoting research and development (R&D) and innovation in these and other health areas.
- *Women:* We commit to create a society where all women and girls are empowered and actively engaged for sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth. We commit to empowering women and girls, including through capacity-building such as education and training as well as promoting active role of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields. We endorse to the G7 Guiding Principles for Building the Capacity of Women and Girls as common guiding principles for our actions.
- *Cyber:* We strongly support an accessible, open, interoperable, reliable and secure cyberspace as one essential foundation for economic growth and prosperity. We promote digital adoption for improved quality of life, by bridging digital divides, enabling innovative business models and affordable universal and high quality access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as well as enhancing digital literacy. We endorse the G7 Principles and Actions on Cyber and commit to take decisive actions.
- *Anti-Corruption:* Our collective and individual action to fight corruption is critical for economic growth, sustainable development and maintaining peace and security. We resolve to take measures to improve public procurement transparency, enhance fiscal transparency, and improve anti-corruption capacity building as well as strengthen law enforcement cooperation. We will also promote global effort to fight corruption. We endorse the G7 Action to Fight Corruption as our commitment to lead by example in moving the global anti-corruption agenda forward.
- *Climate:* The G7, continuing to take a leadership role, commits to taking the necessary steps to secure ratification, acceptance or approval of the Paris Agree-

ment as soon as possible, and calls on all Parties to do so striving for a goal of entry into force in 2016. We commit to take the lead by early, transparent and robust implementation of our nationally determined contributions, and promoting increased ambition over time. We also commit to actively participate in the regular review of global stock-take progress every five years. We commit to formulate and communicate ambitions mid-century long-term low greenhouse gas (GHG) emission development strategies well ahead of the 2020 deadline.

- *Energy:* Recognizing the important role that the energy system has to play in the implementation of the Paris Agreement, we are determined to accelerate our work towards the transition to an energy system that enables a decarbonization of the global economy, and commit to further invest in supporting innovation in energy technologies and encouraging clean energy and energy efficiency, so as to ensure economic growth with reduced GHG emissions. Faced with the increased uncertainty posed by the current energy price levels, we also commit to play a leading role in facilitating energy investments, in particular investments in quality energy infrastructure and upstream development.

Global Economy

State of the Global Economy

The global recovery continues, but growth remains moderate and uneven, and since we last met downside risks to the global outlook have increased. Global trade performance has disappointed in recent years. Weak demand and unaddressed structural problems are the key factors weighing on actual and potential growth. There are potential shocks of a non-economic origin. A UK exit from the EU would reverse the trend towards greater global trade and investment, and the jobs they create, and is a further serious risk to growth. Escalated geopolitical conflicts, terrorism and refugee flows, are complicating factors in the global economic environment. We have strengthened the resilience of our economies in order to avoid falling into another crisis, and to this end, commit to reinforce our efforts to address the current economic situation by taking all appropriate policy responses in a timely manner.

Policy Response

In light of this background, taking into account country-specific circumstances, we commit to strengthening our economic policy responses in a cooperative manner and to employing a more forceful and balanced policy mix, in order to swiftly achieve a strong, sustainable and balanced growth pattern. We stand ready to deploy robust policy responses to bolster short and longer-term growth as necessary. We reiterate our commitments to using all policy tools—monetary, fiscal and structural—individually and collectively, to strengthen global demand and address supply constraints, while continuing our efforts to put debt on a sustainable path. We reaffirm the important role of mutually-reinforcing fiscal, monetary and structural policies, the three pronged approach, to buttress our efforts to achieve strong, sustainable, and balanced growth. We remain committed to ensuring that growth is inclusive and job-rich, benefitting all segments of our societies.

Monetary policy authorities have committed to supporting the economic recovery and overcoming disinflation, consistent with their mandates, including through unconventional policies. However, monetary policy alone cannot lead to strong, sustainable and balanced growth.

We concur on the importance of strengthening our efforts in a cooperative manner to implement our fiscal strategies flexibly to strengthen growth, job creation and confidence, while enhancing resilience and ensuring debt as a share of GDP on a sustainable path, as well as to advance structural reforms decisively. This will also allow us to respond to emerging risks and urgent social and humanitarian needs.

We are also making tax policy and public spending as growth-friendly as possible, including by prioritizing expenditure in favor of high-quality investment. We will consider the composition of our budget expenditures and revenues to support productivity, employment, inclusiveness and growth. We commit to ensuring that our fiscal and structural policies support sustainable social security services, which contribute to addressing our common demographic challenges. We intend to ensure an appropriate level of public investment as well as promote quality infrastructure investment to address shortfalls, including through effective resource mobilization in partnership with the private sector. We commit to further investment in areas conducive to economic growth, such as environment, energy, digital economy, human resource development, education, science and technology.

We are committed to advancing structural reforms to boost growth, productivity and potential output and to leading by example in addressing structural challenges. Labor market reform remains important in some of our economies. We commit to advancing labor market participation by women, the youth and the elderly, and improving job opportunity and quality. We commit to promote active labor market policies in order to ensure flexibility, inclusiveness and provide opportunities for the unemployed. We recognize the importance of achieving price stability and underline that wage dynamics should remain in line with productivity. We commit to ensuring a strong corporate governance framework that helps firms to channel corporate earnings in a productive manner to investment and wages. We are promoting competition, entrepreneurship and innovation, including by lowering barriers to new business entrants. Innovation is critical to realize sustainable growth. Competition is a source of innovation and we commit to protect intellectual property rights.

We recognize that global excess capacity in industrial sectors, especially steel, is a pressing structural challenge with global implications.

We reaffirm our existing exchange rate commitments to market determined exchange rates and to consult closely in regard to actions in foreign exchange markets. We reaffirm that our fiscal and monetary policies have been and will remain oriented towards meeting our respective domestic objectives using domestic instruments and that we will not target exchange rates. We underscore the importance of all countries refraining from competitive devaluation. We reiterate that excess volatility and disorderly movements in exchange rates can have adverse implications for economic and financial stability.

A stable and resilient international financial architecture is critical for economic and financial stability. We welcome the entry-into-effect of the 2010 IMF Quota and Governance reforms and reaffirm our commitment to a strong, quota-based and adequately resourced IMF.

Financial Regulation

We reiterate our commitments to support the timely, full and consistent implementation of the G20 financial sector reform agenda, which will help us achieve our objective of sustainable economic growth. We also remain committed to finalizing the main elements of the regulatory reform agenda. We also reiterate our support for the work by the Basel Committee to refine elements of Basel III framework to ensure its coherence and maximize its effectiveness without further significantly increasing overall capital requirements across the banking sector. We continue to closely monitor, and if necessary, address emerging risks and vulnerabilities in the financial system, including those associated with shadow banking, asset management and other market-based finance activities. We welcome the work of the Financial Stability Board (FSB) in cooperation with other standard setting bodies (SSBs) to assess holistically the extent, drivers and possible persistence of shifts in market liquidity across jurisdictions and asset classes and consider policy measures if necessary.

We will also continue to enhance the monitoring of implementation and effects of reforms to ensure their consistency with our overall objectives, including by addressing any

material unintended consequences. In this regard, we welcome the work by the FSB and SSBs to enhance the analysis of the effects of G20 financial regulatory reforms, including the combined effects and interaction across sectors of related reforms, and look forward to the FSB's second annual report to the G20 on implementation and effects of regulatory reforms. We intend to reap the economic benefits of technologically enabled financial innovations while managing their potential impacts on financial stability and market integrity. We welcome the work of the G7 Cyber Experts Group in the financial area to foster cyber security and enhance cooperation among G7 countries in this area. We also welcome and support the effective implementation of the G20/OECD Principles of Corporate Governance. In particular, we look forward to the development of the assessment methodology of the Principles.

Tax and Transparency

Steady, consistent and concerted implementation of the G20/OECD Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) package is critical to restore public trust in tax systems and to achieve a global level playing field for all engaged in economic activities. We remain committed to lead the process by example. To ensure widespread implementation of the BEPS package, we encourage all relevant and interested countries and jurisdictions to commit to implement the BEPS package and join the new inclusive framework, noting that the first meeting will be held in Kyoto in June.

To restore public trust in tax systems by enhancing transparency of tax information, we reaffirm G20's call on all relevant countries including all financial centers and jurisdictions to implement the standard on automatic exchange of information by committed deadline and to sign the Multilateral Convention, as well as the request to the OECD to establish the "objective criteria to identify non-cooperative jurisdictions with respect to tax transparency." These actions, together with possible defensive measures to be considered against non-cooperative jurisdictions, will help ensure that all relevant countries and financial centers are committed to implementing the agreed standard of tax transparency.

We recognize that strengthening capacity of developing countries in tax policy and administration is indispensable to level the global playing field. To enhance both quantity and quality of assistances in this area, we are committed to the principles of the Addis Tax Initiative along with encouraging other countries to make a similar commitment, and we request that the Platform for Collaboration on Tax be actively utilized to provide an opportunity where developing and developed countries and relevant organizations can share information and knowledge on a regular basis.

Improving the transparency of the beneficial ownership of legal persons and legal arrangements is vital to prevent misuse of these entities and arrangements for corruption, tax evasion, terrorist financing and money laundering. We commit to the implementation of the international standards on transparency, and call on all jurisdictions to do so. In this respect, we look forward to the initial proposals of the Financial Action Task Force and the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes on ways to improve the implementation of the international standards, including on the availability of beneficial ownership information and its international exchange, to be presented by the October meeting of G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors.

Trade

Trade and investment are key drivers of growth, the prosperity of our people and the achievement of sustainable development worldwide. It enables us to access a broad range of goods and services, enhances competitiveness thereby inviting investment and leads to job creation and improved living standards. We continue to strive for better application of internationally recognized labor, social and environmental standards in global supply chains.

We are committed to using trade to create economic opportunities for workers, consumers and firms. In such a highly interconnected

global economy, protectionism only delivers negative consequences. We reaffirm our commitment to keep our markets open and to fight all forms of protectionism including through standstill and rollback. We remain committed to reducing barriers to trade and investment and to improving competitiveness by liberalizing our economies. We recognize the importance of ensuring a level playing field in all areas including officially supported export credit and in this regard, we reiterate our support for the International Working Group to develop guidelines for publicly supported export finance and encourage all participating parties to press for substantive progress through active engagement.

We recognize the negative impact of global excess capacity across industrial sectors, especially steel, on our economies, trade and workers. In particular, we are concerned about subsidies and other support by governments and government-supported institutions that distort the market and contribute to global excess capacity, including such supports granted to overseas expansion of the capacity. We are committed to moving quickly in taking steps to address this issue by enhancing market function, including through coordinated actions that identify and seek to eliminate such subsidies and support, and by encouraging adjustment. In this regard, we are prepared to consult with other major producing countries, utilizing venues such as OECD and other fora, and, as necessary and consistent with the WTO rules and disciplines, to consider the broad range of trade policy instruments and actions to enforce our rights. Our experts will continue to coordinate actions, working with other countries affected by this issue.

We underline that the rules-based multilateral trading system, which is embodied in the WTO, has helped to create a strong and prosperous world economy. We continue to strengthen the functions of the WTO, including on negotiation, dispute settlement and monitoring. We welcome the successful conclusion of the Nairobi Ministerial Conference, and in order to solidify our achieved outcomes in the recent Ministerial Conferences, call for a swift entry into force of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) by the end of 2016 and its full implementation, including through a coordinated approach to Aid for Trade, and the implementation of the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) expansion as agreed. We aim to conclude an ambitious Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA) that eliminates tariffs on a broad range of environmental products by the G20 Summit in September in Hangzhou, having in mind a future oriented agreement. We also look forward to concluding negotiations on an ambitious, balanced and mutually beneficial Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) by the end of 2016. At the same time, we promote forward-looking post-Nairobi discussions with our partners in various fora, addressing outstanding and new issues as well as new formats of negotiations. We call on all WTO members to engage constructively and with sense of urgency to restart negotiations in Geneva, so that the WTO meets the needs of the private sector including SMEs and other stakeholders, as digital technologies and Global Value Chains transform the global movement of goods, services and investment. As an increasing number of developing countries have started to benefit from this changing environment, we recognize the need to shed a new light on the positive role of trade on growth and development, and we look forward to useful work by the OECD and other international organizations.

As a useful complement and a building block to the multilateral trading system, we encourage trade liberalization efforts in various forms. The signing of the TPP is an important step forward for the establishment of a platform for common trade rules and trade integration across the Asia-Pacific region, and we encourage each TPP signatory to complete its domestic process. We welcome the strong commitment of Japan and the EU to reach agreement in principle on a comprehensive, high-level and balanced Japan-EU EPA as early as possible in 2016. We are committed to applying the necessary political will to reach a TTIP agreement as early as this year, provided that it is ambitious, comprehensive, high stan-

dard and mutually beneficial, with a view to harnessing the full potential of the transatlantic economy as soon as possible. We welcome the shared commitment of Canada and the EU to sign CETA this year. We encourage Canada and the EU to bring CETA into force as early as possible.

Infrastructure

The global demand-supply gap of infrastructure investment is a serious bottleneck to the current growth including job creation and development challenges the world faces. While recognizing that effective mobilization of resources in quantity is imperative, we highlight that investment without the quality perspective could end up introducing infrastructure with higher lifecycle costs, less durability, inequitable distributive effects, highly negative environmental and social impacts, vulnerability against natural disasters and the impacts of climate change. We therefore reaffirm the crucial importance for stakeholders, including governments, international organizations and the private sector, to work coherently to bridge the existing gaps by promoting quality infrastructure investment, so as to promote strong, sustainable, and balanced growth, with an important contribution to productivity gains, and to enhance resilience in our society, as well as to contribute to the global efforts to advance sustainable development by addressing development challenges including those identified in the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

To promote such quality infrastructure investment, we strive to align our own infrastructure investment with the G7 Ise-Shima Principles for Promoting Quality Infrastructure Investment, as set out in the Annex. We further encourage the relevant stakeholders, namely governments, international organizations, including MDBs, and the private sector, such as in PPP projects, to align their infrastructure investment and assistance with the Principles, including the introduction and promotion of a transparent, competitive procurement process that takes full account of value for money and quality of infrastructure.

Health

We highlight that health is the foundation of prosperity and security not only for individuals but also for nations. At the juncture of the first G7 summit after the historic adoption of the 2030 Agenda, we are fully committed to implementing the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) therein that ensure well-being at all stages and health security for all individuals, and foster inclusive economic growth for nations. Our leadership is needed more than ever in this regard. UHC provides a comprehensive framework that underpins all of the health targets. To achieve UHC, health systems need to be strong, resilient, sustainable and responsive to the current and future needs of the populations they serve. This includes, but is not limited to, promoting women's, children's, and adolescents' mental and physical health, ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights without discrimination of any kind, and addressing malnutrition as well as communicable and non-communicable diseases, including those due to environmental factors and ageing.

Learning lessons from the Ebola outbreak, especially through the wisdom offered by a wide-range of experts across the globe, including the work of the UN High-Level Panel on the Global Response to Health Crises, we recognize that health systems need to be resilient and have the capacity to respond to, better prepare for and prevent global public health threats such as pandemics and other severe events. Prompt and effective responses to public health emergencies will also require World Health Organization (WHO) reforms, funding mechanisms that enable speedy disbursement for prompt response, coordinated implementation of action among relevant stakeholders and systems, and better implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR).

We note that the efforts and achievements toward UHC, health system strengthening (HSS) and preparing and responding to public health emergencies are further jeopardized by the significant threat posed by AMR. We also acknowledge the importance and contribution

of R&D and innovation to preserve and deploy existing remedies, and to discover new remedies for these and other health areas, such as neglected tropical diseases and poverty related infectious diseases as well as conditions related to ageing.

With these in mind, we particularly commit to take concrete actions in the following areas as elaborated in the G7 Ise-Shima Vision for Global Health, as set out in the Annex. We also instruct our Health Ministers to further elaborate necessary actions on these areas at their Meeting in Kobe in September.

Reinforcing of the Global Health Architecture to strengthen response to public health emergencies

Recognizing the Ebola outbreak turned into a major epidemic partly due to the lack of swift and coordinated actions among relevant stakeholders, we commit to take leadership in reinforcing the Global Health Architecture, relying on strengthening existing organizations.

We reaffirm the WHO's central role in that architecture to enable and support more swift, effective and coordinated responses to public health emergencies. In this light, we urge and support the WHO to implement its emergency and wider reforms, including its One WHO approach across the three levels of the Organization, namely its headquarters, regional and country offices, in a timely manner, recognizing its resource needs. We also highlight the vital importance of adequate, responsible and timely disbursement of financial resources to ensure appropriate response to public health emergencies. In this connection, we call on the international community to support the Contingency Fund for Emergency (CFE) to enable swift initial responses by the WHO. Further, to support a surge response by governments, multilateral agencies and NGOs, we welcome the World Bank's formal announcement of launching the Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (PEF), and invite the international community including G7 members to extend technical support and financial contributions to this end. We also call upon relevant international organizations to ensure coordination among the PEF and their related funding mechanisms including the CFE.

We commend the WHO for accelerating efforts to lead coordination among relevant partners in large-scale outbreaks and public health emergencies, considering its central role particularly in infectious diseases and the need for continuous, predictable, rapid and efficient response throughout the development of outbreaks from small- to large-scale and into public health emergencies, leveraging existing coordination structures, particularly the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). We invite the WHO and OCHA under the UN Secretary General (UNSG) to review, strengthen and formalize coordination arrangement among the WHO, the UN and other relevant partners, and to update the G7 Health Ministers on the progress in September.

Recent outbreaks of Ebola and Zika underscore the imperative to improve prevention of, detection of and response to public health emergencies, whether naturally occurring, deliberate or accidental. In that respect, we remain committed to advancing compliance with the WHO's IHR objectives including through the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA). We renew our support to a coordinated approach to offer concrete assistance to 76 countries and regions and support to these partners to develop national plans in close coordination with the WHO and other relevant organizations. Recognizing the primary responsibility of countries to strengthen their IHR core capacities, we intend to assist these partners to achieve the common and measurable targets of the Joint External Evaluation (JEE) tool published by the WHO and in partnership with other organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). We also commit to support, undergo, and share such evaluations with our partners. In order to scale up the implementation of the IHR and in line with its implementation of the new Health Emergencies Program, we encourage the WHO to consider building on already existing structures, such as

the Department of Global Capacities, Alert and Response and its Lyon office, and the emerging work of the Alliance for Country Assessment for Global Health Security. We recognize the importance of mobilizing financial resources of the relevant international organizations for strengthening preparedness for and prevention of pandemics, and look forward to discussing on the matter with those organizations, including the World Bank such as International Development Association.

Attaining of UHC with strong health systems and better preparedness

Recognizing the importance of accelerating achievement of UHC with the principle of no one left behind, we reiterate our commitment to enhance our support and coordination to strengthen health systems, especially in developing countries, to make them more resilient, inclusive, affordable, sustainable, and equitable ones. To this end, we emphasize the need for a strengthened international framework to coordinate the efforts and expertise of all relevant stakeholders and various fora / initiatives at the international level, including disease-specific efforts. In this connection, we support the establishment of UHC 2030 that seeks to ensure the International Health Partnership (IHP+) principles and is supported by initiatives such as the Roadmap Healthy Systems, Healthy Lives. We look forward to discussions with the UNSG about the idea of nominating an envoy to promote and catalyze efforts towards UHC across different sectors. We affirm that enhancing prevention of and preparedness for public health emergencies, including through strengthening IHR core capacities, is expected to be part of HSS efforts.

Meanwhile, taking into consideration the pressing need for HSS in Low Income Countries (LICs) and Lower Middle Income Countries (LMICs) where health systems are especially weak, we are also committed to support country-led HSS in collaboration with relevant partners including the WHO. In relation to this, while stressing the need of coordination with the WHO and other relevant international organizations, we welcome the World Bank's endeavor to promote UHC for Africa. We are committed to ending AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, working in partnership with the Global Fund (GF) and others. To this end, we fully support a successful 5th replenishment of the GF, taking the opportunity of the GF replenishment conference in Montreal in September, and call on traditional and new donors to support the replenishment.

The promotion of UHC also requires provision of services to protect and improve the health of all individuals throughout their life course. As a part of such efforts and focusing on the areas where urgent responses are needed along with the rapid demographic changes, we continue to take leadership in promoting the health of women and girls, adolescents and children, including through efforts to provide access to sexual and reproductive health, rights and services, immunization, better nutrition, and needs-based responses in emergencies and disasters. In this regard, we welcome platforms such as the Global Financing Facility for Every Woman Every Child, Gavi the Vaccine Alliance, and Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, and reaffirm our continued commitment to reaching polio eradication targets. We also commit to promoting active ageing, with due consideration to gender specific aspects, through multi-sectoral approaches including the promotion of age-friendly communities and support for communities to become dementia-friendly. To this end, we share knowledge and experiences, and encourage developing countries including through the forum on active ageing to be held in Japan this year. We recognize the rising challenges of promoting a positive environment for innovative research and development, encouraging access to medicines and health care, and ensuring the sustainability of health systems, and we welcome an exchange of views on these issues at the upcoming G7 Health Ministers' meeting, recognizing the uniqueness of national circumstances, priorities, and health system designs.

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

Good progress has been made to combat AMR including the adoption of WHO Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance and relevant resolutions by FAO and the OIE, but more needs to be done. Building on the G7's previous commitment, we commit to make collective efforts for strengthening and actively implementing a multi-sectoral One Health Approach, taking into account the sectors including human and animal health, agriculture, food and the environment. We particularly endeavor to preserve effectiveness of antimicrobials, including by preserving existing antibiotics, to strengthen the inter-sectoral surveillance in all sectors, and to improve access to effective antimicrobials through accelerated support in cooperation with other countries and private sector partners. Recognizing the need for addressing market failure in which pharmaceutical companies are not producing new diagnostics and drugs required to combat infectious diseases in the face of AMR, we also commit to consider potential for new incentives to promote R&D on AMR and call on the international community to take further action. Against those backdrops, we are committed to support the 2016 High-Level Meeting on AMR at the UN General Assembly that promotes effective implementation of the Global Action Plan through multi-sectoral global, regional, national, and community collaborative efforts, and recognize existing initiatives, such as those highlighted in the EU Ministerial One Health Conference on AMR, the Tokyo Meeting of Health Ministers on AMR in Asia, and the GHSA AMR Action Package.

Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality

We emphasize that the empowerment of women and girls and gender equality are indispensable for their equal participation as agents of change in the economic, social and political spheres of our societies. Globally, women and girls still face barriers and discrimination that prevent them from realizing their full potential. We also affirm the importance of promoting and protecting women's rights, and recognize the role of women as key actors to ensure peace and security including when addressing the threat of violent extremism, the ongoing displacement crisis and protracted conflicts and disasters. Therefore, it remains the G7's goal to create societies where all women and girls are empowered and actively engaged for sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth and peace and where their human rights are universally respected and protected. With this strong conviction in mind, we are committed to take leadership in gender-responsive approaches to implementing the SDGs and addressing climate change, and envision mainstreaming gender equality throughout the SDGs and in every policy area, ensuring that our national policies and public financial management to promote equity, gender equality and women and girls' empowerment. We especially emphasize the following three areas today: empowering women and girls, including through capacity-building; promoting the active role of women in STEM fields; and making concrete progress in the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Empowering women and girls to realize their full potential

Building upon the outcomes of the past G7 Summits, the G7 Forum for Dialogue with Women and the World Assembly for Women (WAW!), we are determined to ensure women's equal rights, full and effective participation, equal pay for equal work, and equal opportunities for leadership, while calling for active engagement of the private sector, including through our efforts to promote the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) of UN Women. We also endorse the mission of the UN's High Level Panel (HLP) on Women's Economic Empowerment. We reiterate our commitment to expanding opportunities for women and girls by building their capacity including through quality education and training, and supporting women and girls to realize their full potential. To translate such commitments into actions, we endorse common guiding principles set out in the Annex, the G7 Guiding Principles for Capacity Building of

Women and Girls: towards Sustainable, Inclusive and Equitable Growth and Peace, that builds on the SDGs in the area of gender equality, health and education. We invite other interested countries to join us in these commitments.

Promoting the active role of women in STEM fields and careers

We recognize that a critical determinant of global competitiveness is human talent, and that promoting the active role of women in STEM fields and careers broadens the talent pool and enhances creativity and innovation which leads to economic growth and productivity. We aim to improve women's access to higher-paying jobs and to reduce gender wage gaps. Despite such benefits, while the number of women graduates in STEM fields is increasing, the share of women employed in STEM careers has shown little change in the last decade. We emphasize that, in addition to education and training, it is important to remove the gender bias that women encounter, promote institutional change and create legal and policy environments which effectively advance gender equality in those careers. In this light, we launch a G7 initiative, Women's Initiative in Developing STEM Career (WINDS), to catalyze global momentum to promote the advancement of women in STEM fields and careers, in partnership with the OECD, UN-Women, and other international agencies and stakeholders.

Making concrete progress in Women, Peace and Security

We are appalled by the increase in gender-based violence in all its forms including sexual violence, in conflict and post-conflict situations, when fleeing a conflict or when migrating, as well as during and in the aftermath of natural disasters. We therefore reaffirm the importance of tackling all forms of gender based violence including in our societies, supporting those affected and holding perpetrators to account with the aim to address the culture of impunity, while making all efforts to prevent sexual and gender-based violence. We are also committed to work with the UN and others to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda. In this connection, we call on all states to support full implementation of the UNSG's zero tolerance policy towards sexual exploitation and of the UN Security Council resolution 2272. We highlight the importance of women's active and meaningful participation in conflict prevention and resolution, mediation, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction consistent with the UN Security Council resolution 1325 and its subsequent resolutions. We therefore call upon all states to implement the commitments they made at last year's UN Security Council High Level Review of SCR 1325, and remain committed to supporting efforts by other countries, both financially and technically, to establish and implement National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security or similar gender-equality related strategies.

Moreover, recognizing the underrepresentation of women among international conflict mediators, we commit to increasing the number of women in such positions.

Cyber

We strongly support an accessible, open, interoperable, reliable and secure cyberspace as one essential foundation for economic growth and prosperity. This also enhances the common values of the G7, such as freedom, democracy and respect for privacy and human rights. We will take decisive and robust measures in close cooperation against malicious use of cyberspace, both by states and non-state actors, including terrorists. We reaffirm that international law is applicable in cyberspace. We commit to promote a strategic framework of international cyber stability consisting of the applicability of existing international law to state behavior in cyberspace, the promotion of voluntary norms of responsible state behavior during peacetime, and the development and the implementation of practical cyber confidence building measures between states. In this context, we welcome the report of the UN

Group of Governmental Experts in 2015 and call upon all states to be guided by the assessments and recommendations of the report. We also reaffirm that no country should conduct or knowingly support ICT-enabled theft of intellectual property, including trade secrets or other confidential business information, with the intent of providing competitive advantages to its companies or commercial sectors. We commit to facilitate the free flow of information to ensure openness, transparency and freedom of the Internet, and a fair and equal access to the cyberspace for all actors of digital economy while respecting privacy and data protection, as well as cyber security. We commit to the protection and promotion of human rights online. We commit to promote a multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance which includes full and active participation by governments, the private sector, civil society, the technical community, and international organizations, among others. We recognize that states have particular responsibilities and roles in the ICT environment, just as elsewhere to promote security, stability and prosperity. We commit to collaborate to maximize the potential of the digitally connected world, and to address global challenges, bridge digital divides, realize inclusive development, and to achieve progress on the 2030 Agenda. We endorse the G7 Principles and Actions on Cyber, as set out in the Annex to promote and protect an open, interoperable, reliable and secure cyberspace. We decide to establish a new G7 working group on cyber to enhance our policy coordination and practical cooperation to promote security and stability in cyberspace.

Anti-Corruption

Corruption is fundamentally contrary to our common values, in particular, the rule of law, democracy and fair competition. We reiterate that our collective and individual action to fight corruption is critical for economic growth, sustainable development and maintaining peace and security. Recognizing the magnitude of the global problem of corruption, we endorse the G7 Action to Fight Corruption, as set out in the Annex, which demonstrates our renewed commitment to fight corruption and ensure transparency worldwide. We will promote the effective implementation of the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), as well as other key international instruments such as the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention and will promote full participation in their respective review mechanisms. We welcome the outcomes and the momentum created by the Anti-Corruption Summit hosted by the United Kingdom in May to galvanize action against corruption in the international community, as well as valuable initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership, the Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), and the UN Global Compact. We commit to lead by example in moving the global anti-corruption agenda forward including in other international fora.

Foreign Policy

Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism

We strongly condemn terrorism in all forms and manifestations. The attacks, atrocities and abuses of human rights targeting civilians and other victims perpetrated by ISIL/Da'esh, Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations pose serious challenges to peace and international security, as well as to common values and principles for all humanity. We take note, with grave concern, of the growing number of terror attacks, especially those aimed at vulnerable sites due to their open access and limited security barriers as well as cultural property. The Internet and social media have been exploited throughout the world for terrorist, violent extremist and other criminal purposes, such as terrorist recruiting and financing, attack planning and coordination. Aviation security is also a global challenge that requires all countries to ensure implementation of appropriate and sustainable security measures that can evolve to respond to the terrorist threat.

We reiterate that it is essential for the international community to make further collective and coordinated efforts to fight this urgent global security threat. We stress the importance of continued cooperation with the pri-

vate sector, civil society and communities and the "whole-of-society" approach.

We commend the intensive counterterrorism efforts that have already been made globally, regionally, bilaterally and domestically. We emphasize the importance of filling gaps and accelerating such existing efforts and reaffirm that the G7, as a catalyst for global progress, can play a leading role in promoting effective implementation of counterterrorism measures in cooperation with the international community in a manner fully compliant with international human rights obligations. We continue to work together to prevent the flow of foreign terrorist fighters and terrorism-related materials and equipment. We reassert our commitment to countering terrorist financing as declared in the G7 Action Plan on Combatting the Financing of Terrorism at the G7 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' meeting in Sendai.

The payment of ransoms to terrorist groups is one of the sources of income which supports their recruitment efforts, strengthens their operational capability to organize and carry out terrorist attacks, and incentivizes future incidents of kidnapping for ransom, thereby increasing the risks to our nationals. We unequivocally reiterate our resolve not to pay ransoms to terrorists, to protect the lives of our nationals and, in accordance with relevant international conventions, to reduce terrorist groups' access to the funding that allows them to survive and thrive, and call on all states to do so.

We commit to promote peaceful co-existence wherever differences of opinion, culture and faith exist, respect for diversity, tolerance, and inclusive dialogue in order to break the vicious cycle of violence and hatred and to prevent the emergence and spread of violent extremism. In this regard, we welcome the UNSG's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, call for its implementation and support a strong model of UN leadership which will deliver a genuinely whole-of-UN approach. We also stress the importance of the role of local communities, especially women and youth, as well as empowerment of alternative voices including through education and dialogue.

We also commit to enhance our coordination to support countries in need of building their capacity on countering terrorism and violent extremism.

Committing ourselves to translate these principles into concrete action, we commit to take actions as set out in the Annex, the G7 Action Plan on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism. We commit to work to support the implementation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions, to bolster information sharing, to strengthen border security, to improve aviation security, to counter terrorist financing, to fight against trafficking of cultural properties, to prevent and counter violent extremism, to step up our engagement with the private sector and to further coordinate our capacity building assistance. We commit to regularly take stock of the implementation of the Action Plan.

Migration and Refugee crisis

With the number of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and vulnerable migrants at its highest level since the Second World War, the G7 recognizes the ongoing large scale movements of migrants and refugees as a global challenge which requires a global response, in full respect for human rights and in accordance with applicable international law. We place the highest priority on humanely and effectively managing this challenge, addressing both the humanitarian consequences and the root causes of massive displacement. Large movements of people are a multi-faceted phenomenon, which requires addressing its root causes resulting from conflicts, state fragility and insecurity, demographic, economic and environmental trends as well as natural disasters. The international community should therefore increase its efforts towards conflict prevention, stabilization, and post-conflict peacebuilding and focus on finding solutions in order to reduce poverty, promote peace, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights, support inclusive economic growth and improve the delivery of basic services.

We commit to increase global assistance to meet immediate and longer-term needs of refugees and other displaced persons as well as their host communities, via humanitarian, financial, and development assistance, cooperation, as well as other measures to support trade and investment consistent with our international obligations, recognizing the necessity of closer collaboration between humanitarian, development and other actors. We aim to increase the socio-economic development of affected regions, notably regarding education, health care, infrastructure, and promotion of human rights and equal opportunities. We recognize the importance of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda regarding effective migration management, and we commit to strengthen our development cooperation with our partner countries, with special attention to African, Middle East and neighboring countries of origin and transit.

The G7 encourages international financial institutions and bilateral donors to bolster their financial and technical assistance for refugees and other displaced persons as well as their host communities and welcomes, in particular, the launch of New Financing Initiative to Support the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region. We also call for close coordination with existing facilities and funding mechanisms, such as the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis ('Madad Fund'), the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey, and the EU Trust Fund for Africa. We stress the importance of increasing support to the most affected host countries, such as Jordan, Lebanon and Kenya, and continue close cooperation with Turkey, which will help deliver the outcomes of the London Conference on Supporting Syria and the Region. The Syrian crisis has underlined the need for the international community to be better equipped to assist developing countries of all income levels and across all regions in addressing cases of protracted displacements. Increasing global support for relevant international humanitarian and emergency relief organizations, such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme, and UN Children's Rights and Emergency Relief Organization (UNICEF), is vital.

We call for the adoption of wide-range and long-term strategies and instruments to tackle the root causes of the surge of economic migration and refugee flows. We recognize that there is a need for tools that assist countries in providing sustainable livelihoods for refugees and other displaced persons as well as their host communities, through financing and technical advice to support access to jobs, education, health services, and basic infrastructure. Along with other World Bank shareholders, we ask the World Bank to develop a new platform that expands its toolkit to assist countries hosting refugees. We also welcome that the European Investment Bank is exploring options to develop a long-term crisis response initiative in support of sustainable growth, vital infrastructure and social cohesion in the Mediterranean region and Africa.

Legal channels for migration will be enhanced consistently with national and regional frameworks in tandem with addressing irregular migration. The G7 encourages the temporary admission of refugees and the establishment of resettlement schemes, to alleviate pressure on countries hosting the largest numbers of refugees. Recognizing the contribution made by existing initiatives, work to expand resettlement opportunities and other forms of safe and legal humanitarian admission for refugees should continue. We commit to assist the front-line states in creating education and employment opportunities for refugees in order to empower them as future assets contributing to the stability and prosperity of host communities and the reconstruction of home countries after their return.

The G7 supports the strengthening of the international protection approaches through promoting the core principles of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol, and by providing safe haven for those fleeing persecution. It is also clear, however, that protection frameworks should not be used to bypass legitimate immigration assessment. To these ends, individuals fleeing persecution should be granted effective protection in the

first safe country they enter, and governments should provide opportunities for safe and orderly resettlement processes as well as provide international humanitarian and development assistance for refugees, host countries and communities.

At the same time, we encourage cooperation with countries of origin and transit to facilitate the safe and dignified return and reintegration of migrants who are not eligible for international protection, including under the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol. We are determined to continue to fight migrant smuggling and modern slavery, and protect victims of trafficking together with countries of origin, transit and destination. We call for the conclusion and full implementation of the relevant international instruments, such as the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols.

Further, we support UN-led efforts to strengthen the long-term capacity and effectiveness of the international system to respond to humanitarian crises, which includes: (i) increasing resources for humanitarian assistance, (ii) reducing reliance on humanitarian aid by investing in resilience and disaster risk reduction, and by seeking durable solutions to displacement; (iii) broadening the resource base; as well as (iv) enhancing access, efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian aid delivery systems. We also reiterate the importance of addressing the root causes of displacement, including human rights violations.

The G7 recalls that only sustainable political settlements within countries of origin, including Syria, will bring lasting solutions to the problem of forced displacement, including refugees.

We welcome the World Humanitarian Summit and look forward to the UN General Assembly Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants and the Leaders' Summit on Refugees in New York in September.

Deauville Partnership

We reiterate our commitment to the Deauville Partnership to support the countries of the MENA in their economic and governance reform efforts.

We recognize the new challenges facing the Arab Countries in Transition (ACTs) including the rise of violent extremism, intensification of military conflicts, complex humanitarian crises and significant number of refugees. We emphasize the need for stability, democratization and inclusive economic growth. To that end, we underscore the importance of structural economic reforms, improved governance, the empowerment of women and robust civil society participation.

The Deauville Partnership remains an important platform for dialogue and cooperation with the ACTs, regional partners and relevant international institutions. We commit to promote the socio-economic role of women in the region and to convene an expert meeting on this topic. We welcome the shared commitment to implement the Deauville Compact on Economic Governance, the Action Plan for Financial Inclusion and the projects financed by the MENA Transition Fund. We recognize the importance of SME-related projects and encourage the updating of the ACT SME Action Plans. We remain committed to supporting the ACTs through country-tailored approaches.

Syria

We call on all parties and their backers to fully implement the nationwide Cessation of Hostilities achieved based on the efforts taken by the International Syria Support Group (ISSG). We condemn in the strongest terms violations of the Cessation of Hostilities, especially in and around Aleppo, by the Syrian regime and reiterate that parties must cease indiscriminate attacks on civilians. We welcome the ISSG's commitment to intensifying its efforts to ensure that all parties stop any further indiscriminate attacks, and welcome Russia's commitment in the Joint Statement of May 9 2016 to 'work with the Syrian authorities to minimize aviation operations over areas predominantly inhabited by civilians or parties to the cessation'. We expect Russia and Iran to urge the regime to comply with renewed cessation and to stop its attacks directed at civilians,

and urge all parties to the cessation to abide by the terms of the cessation. We urge all members of the international community and parties to the conflict to fully implement all relevant UN Security Council resolutions, particularly 2254, 2258 and 2268 to support the efforts by the UN Special Envoy, and to commit to an inclusive and peaceful political transition in Syria based on the Geneva Communiqué. We welcome the ISSG's clear reiteration of the objective that, by the target date of August 1 2016 as established by UN Security Council resolution 2254, the parties reach agreement on a framework for a genuine political transition, which would include a broad, inclusive, non-sectarian transitional governing body with full executive powers.

We express our grave concern at the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and call on all parties, notably the Syrian regime, to immediately allow humanitarian agencies rapid, safe, unhindered and sustained access in Syria, in particular the besieged areas and hard to reach places, as well as to release all arbitrarily detained persons, including women and children. We welcome the ISSG's commitment that, starting June 1 2016, if the UN is denied humanitarian access to any of the designated besieged areas, the World Food Program should immediately carry out a program of air bridges and air drops for all areas in need. We are committed to supporting displaced persons and their host communities and to working towards a long-term, sustainable post-conflict stabilization and rehabilitation of Syria and to eradicating conditions conducive to violent extremism.

We express grave concern over the findings of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) regarding the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Practical and political support for the OPCW and for the UN–OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism is essential to identify and hold to account those involved in chemical weapons use in Syria.

Iraq

We commit our continued support for the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and the Iraqi people, as well as the Iraqi government's efforts to accelerate political and economic reforms and enhance national reconciliation. We commend Iraqi forces' efforts in their fight against ISIL/Da'esh. We call on the international community to continue to support the government of Iraq, including by extending humanitarian assistance and supporting stabilization efforts in areas liberated from ISIL/Da'esh. We also commit to provide, and expedite as appropriate, support for Iraq's efforts to address its fiscal challenge and strengthen its economy through reforms, in coordination with the IMF and other international financial institutions. It is critical that all Iraqis, including the Iraqi Kurdistan region, benefit from this support. In this context, the G7 is mobilizing more than 3.6 billion USD in bilateral assistance and other financial support to complement support from the international financial institutions.

Iran

We reaffirm our commitment to actively support the full and effective implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The lifting of nuclear-related economic and financial sanctions as provided for in the JCPOA represents an opportunity for Iran to reengage with the global community. We call on Iran to play a constructive role in its region and thus contribute to the efforts to achieve political solutions, reconciliation and peace, and cooperate to prevent and counter the spread of terrorism and violent extremism. We are deeply concerned by Iran's decision to proceed with the testing of ballistic missiles inconsistent with UN Security Council resolution 2231. We further call on Iran to comply with its international human rights obligations.

North Korea

We condemn in the strongest terms North Korea's nuclear test in January and its subsequent launches using ballistic missile technology. These acts violate multiple UN Security Council resolutions and pose a grave threat to regional and international peace and security.

We demand that North Korea immediately and fully comply with all relevant UN Security Council resolutions and its commitments under the 2005 Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks, and not conduct any further nuclear tests, launches, or engage in any other destabilizing or provocative actions. We call on the international community to fully implement and enforce relevant UN Security Council resolutions. We also deplore the human rights violations in North Korea and strongly urge North Korea to immediately address the international community's concerns, including the abductions issue.

Ukraine/Russia

We stand united in our conviction that the conflict in Ukraine can only be solved by diplomatic means and in full respect for international law, especially the legal obligation to respect Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. We reiterate our condemnation of the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia and reaffirm our policy of its non-recognition and sanctions against those involved.

We are concerned by continued violence along the line of contact in violation of the ceasefire; we urge all sides to take concrete steps that will lead to the complete ceasefire required under the Minsk agreements. We also urge all sides to fulfill their commitments without delay with a view to holding local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions as soon as possible in accordance with the Minsk agreements. We emphasize our strongest support for full implementation of the Minsk agreements and the work of the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. We expect Russia to live up to its commitments and use its influence over the separatists to meet their commitments in full. We stress the OSCE's key role in helping to deescalate the crisis, and we call upon all sides, particularly the separatists, to provide the organization's monitors full and unfettered access throughout the conflict zone.

We recall that the duration of sanctions is clearly linked to Russia's complete implementation of the Minsk agreements and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty. Sanctions can be rolled back when Russia meets these commitments. However, we also stand ready to take further restrictive measures in order to increase cost on Russia should its actions so require. We recognize the importance of maintaining dialogue with Russia in order to ensure it abides by the commitments it has made as well as international law and to reach a comprehensive, sustainable and peaceful solution to the crisis.

We commend and support the steps Ukraine is taking to implement comprehensive structural, governance and economic reforms and encourage Ukraine to continue and accelerate the process. We urge Ukraine to maintain and enhance the momentum in its fight against corruption and its judicial reform, including the Prosecutor General's office. We are fully committed to providing long-term support to this end. We also commend the work of the Ukraine support group of G7 Ambassadors in Kyiv.

We reaffirm our commitment to undertake joint efforts with Ukraine to convert the Chernobyl site into a stable and environmentally safe condition, 30 years after the catastrophe.

Libya

We welcome the decree of the Presidential Council authorizing the ministers of the Government of National Accord (GNA) to assume duties and take control over their ministries, pending the taking of the official oath. We will work closely with the GNA as the sole legitimate government of Libya and call on all Libyan parties to recognize its authority and implement the Libyan Political Agreement. We stand ready to offer support to the GNA to help restore peace, security and prosperity, and address the dire humanitarian suffering. We express our full support to United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General Kobler's continued efforts to facilitate the full implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement. We remain deeply concerned about the growing terrorist threat, trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants and arms in Libya. We urge all Libyan parties and

security forces to work quickly to implement a unified command in coordination with the GNA and in accordance with the Libyan Political Agreement to fight ISIL/Da'esh. We support the sole and effective oversight of the GNA over the Libyan financial institutions and the Libyan National Oil Corporation, ensuring that they function for the benefit of all Libyans. We express concern about activities which could damage the integrity and unity of such institutions, and condemn all attempts to illicitly export crude oil from Libya. We reaffirm our commitment to upholding the arms embargo, in accordance with applicable UN Security Council resolutions while fully supporting the GNA's intention to submit appropriate arms embargo exemption requests to the UN Libya Sanctions Committee to procure necessary lethal arms and materiel to counter UN-designated terrorist groups and to combat ISIL/Da'esh throughout the country.

Afghanistan

We stand firm in our longstanding commitment to Afghanistan and its people and our continuing support for the government, as it counters terrorism and undertakes reforms. We remain concerned by the threat to security and stability in Afghanistan, and strongly support efforts toward establishing an Afghan-led peace process. We look forward to joining other members of the international community at the NATO Warsaw Summit in July and the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan in October which will be important opportunities for Afghanistan to reconfirm its commitments toward continued reforms, and for the international community to renew political, security and development assistance commitments to Afghanistan.

Middle East Peace Process

We urge both sides to avoid further escalation, including measures which could threaten the two-state solution and strongly support international efforts to work towards a negotiated solution including the efforts undertaken by the Middle East Quartet. We welcome the upcoming ministerial conference in Paris.

Yemen

We call on all parties to work towards an inclusive, peaceful solution that will end the conflict in Yemen, including a resumption of the political transition, in line with relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and the rebuilding of the Yemeni economy. We fully support the efforts of UN Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed to facilitate ongoing peace talks in Kuwait, to end the violence in Yemen and to urge all parties to comply fully with the ceasefire. We underline the necessity of all parties taking immediate steps to enable rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all areas of the country.

Africa

We are convinced that stability, security, inclusive and accountable governance, as well as economic growth and diversification remain the foundations of long-term prosperity and sustainable development in Africa. We recognize the strides made by many African partners in these areas and welcome the successful political transitions in the Central African Republic and in Burkina Faso, as well as the recent positive developments in Mali and South Sudan. We also welcome the growing coordination between African partners to counter terrorism and violent extremism, especially in the Lake Chad Basin, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. We commit to sustain and deepen the support we pledged to Nigeria in 2015, including on its efforts to tackle corruption, improve governance, strengthen its economy, and defeat violent extremism in all its forms. We also recognize the need to address both the immediate and the root causes of current challenges and the significant obstacles that remain, including persistent instability and serious humanitarian situations in Sudan, the Lake Chad Basin, South Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and Burundi as well as corruption and the lack of economic diversification in the re-

gion. We thus continue to support African and regional organizations' efforts to address these issues, including to prevent and resolve conflicts, strengthen democratic institutions, fight against trafficking in persons, manage irregular migration, combat the illicit transfer of conventional arms, create jobs for the youth, expose and tackle corruption, and promote sustainable development and resilience, emphasizing the importance of African ownership of these efforts. We continue to assist the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and support the development of the Somali security forces. We also reaffirm our commitment to combating illicit wildlife trafficking and, recognizing the urgency of the situation, further reaffirm our previous commitment to the Resolution 69/314 adopted at the UN General Assembly.

Venezuela

We call on the Venezuelan government to fully respect fundamental rights, democratic processes, freedoms and the rule of law to provide access to fair trials and due process, and to establish conditions that would allow for dialogue between the government and its citizens, in order for them to find a peaceful means of resolving Venezuela's increasingly acute economic and political crisis, while respecting the will of the people. We call on the Venezuelan executive branch and the National Assembly to work urgently together to this end.

Maritime Security

We reiterate our commitment to maintaining a rules-based maritime order in accordance with the principles of international law as reflected in UNCLOS, to peaceful dispute settlement supported by confidence building measures and including through legal means as well as to sustainable uses of the seas and oceans, and to respecting freedom of navigation and overflight. We reaffirm the importance of states' making and clarifying their claims based on international law, refraining from unilateral actions which could increase tensions and not using force or coercion in trying to drive their claims, and seeking to settle disputes by peaceful means including through juridical procedures including arbitration.

We reaffirm the importance of strengthening maritime safety and security, in particular the fight against piracy, through international and regional cooperation.

We are concerned about the situation in the East and South China Seas, and emphasize the fundamental importance of peaceful management and settlement of disputes.

We endorse the G7 Foreign Ministers' Statement on Maritime Security.

Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

We reaffirm that non-proliferation and disarmament issues are among our top priorities. We reaffirm our commitment to seeking a safer world for all and to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons in a way that promotes international stability. In this context, we endorse the G7 Foreign Ministers' Hiroshima Declaration on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation and the Statement of the G7 Non-Proliferation Directors Group on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. We remain committed to the universalization of the treaties and conventions relevant to, amongst others, preventing and combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in particular the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

UN Reform and UN Peace Operations Review

We reaffirm the importance and necessity of realizing a strengthened, more effective and efficient United Nations and, to this end, note the importance of continued engagement on reforms of the United Nations, such as of the Security Council.

We also support the ongoing reform processes on UN peace operations and peacebuilding activities, and call for further efforts to advance these processes by Member States, the UN system and relevant international and regional partners. We welcome and urge

timely implementation of the pledges made at the Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping.

Human Rights

We commit our support to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people, peaceful pluralism and respect for diversity. We recall that compliance with obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law is a cornerstone for peace and security. We reaffirm the importance of the independent voice of human rights defenders and other civil society actors, as well as of partnerships between states and civil society in the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedom.

Nuclear Safety and Security

We welcome the report of the Nuclear Safety and Security Group. Five years after the Fukushima Daiichi accident, we reaffirm our commitment to achieving and maintaining the highest levels of nuclear safety worldwide and call upon all states with nuclear power programs and every stakeholder engaged in international nuclear cooperation including transfers to promote robust safety standards and infrastructures. In this regard, full participation in multilateral cooperation frameworks for nuclear safety, including the Convention on Nuclear Safety, is essential and we call upon all stakeholders for their active engagement and continued enhancement of these frameworks. We also welcome the successful outcome of the fourth Nuclear Security Summit in Washington. We will continue to prioritize the security of nuclear and other radioactive materials and will work to further strengthen the global nuclear security architecture. We will also continue our political exchanges on nuclear security, in particular at the ministerial-level IAEA International Conference on Nuclear Security.

Climate Change, Energy, Environment

Climate Change

Welcoming the historic achievement in Paris, we reaffirm not only our continuous commitment in our global efforts against climate change, but also our determination to maintain the momentum of COP21 and ensure swift and successful implementation of the Paris Agreement including the long-term aims on mitigation, adaptation, and finance. In this context, we welcome the fact that nearly every party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has signed the Paris Agreement, including all G7 members. The G7, continuing to take a leadership role, commits to taking the necessary steps to secure ratification, acceptance or approval of the agreement as soon as possible and calls on all Parties to do so striving for a goal of entry into force in 2016.

We commit to take the lead by early, transparent and robust implementation of our nationally determined contributions, and promoting increased ambition over time. We also commit to actively participate in the regular review of global stock-take progress every five years.

We also commit to formulating and communicating mid-century long-term low GHG emission development strategies well ahead of the 2020 deadline, mindful of the significance of holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and of pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels as well as of achieving a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of GHGs in the second half of the century.

We encourage all Parties to engage constructively in technical work with a view to agreeing upon detailed rules for the effective and transparent implementation of the Paris Agreement by all countries, including by the major emitters.

Recognizing that we, together with other donor countries, are making steady progress toward achieving the goal of jointly mobilizing

USD 100 billion annually by 2020 in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation, we continue our efforts to provide and mobilize increased climate finance from public and private sources. We encourage other countries to provide or continue to provide and mobilize climate finance, to assist developing countries with respect to mitigation and adaptation and to implement their national climate plans (NDCs). We welcome the commitments made by MDBs and development finance institutions to deliver increased levels of climate finance. We call on MDBs and development financial institutions to mainstream climate change actions across development strategies and use to the fullest extent possible their balance sheets and their capacity to mobilize private financing and other partners in support of country-led programs to meet this goal. In the context of this goal, we also emphasize our continuous commitment of mobilizing finance and promoting the transfer of appropriate technology and capacity-building to support adaptation planning and actions in the most vulnerable developing countries in response to their growing needs.

We welcome the progress to date and are ready to further promote the relevant initiatives on climate risk insurance, early warning systems and renewable energy in Africa, such as InsuResilience, CREWS and the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative. We further welcome the involvement of the private sector, subnational entities, and others through the Lima-Paris Action Agenda. We recognize that innovation is critical for an effective, long-term global response to our shared climate challenge, and intend to play a leading role in Mission Innovation. We also welcome the leadership of the private sector community in this regard. We recognize the important role of providing incentives for emission reduction activities, including tools such as domestic policies and carbon pricing. We welcome the establishment of the Carbon Market Platform and its first strategic dialogue to be held in Tokyo.

Recognizing the urgent need for effective efforts in the field of international aviation, we express our strong commitment to work together for the adoption of a Global Market-Based Measure (GMBM) in order to enable carbon neutral growth from 2020, through engaging constructive dialogue, by reaching a decision at the 39th session of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Assembly. We encourage all world leaders to join us in supporting a decision later this year.

We also recognize the importance of mitigating emissions of short-lived climate pollutants including black carbon, hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), and methane to help slow the rate of near-term warming. In particular, we resolve to drive down our methane emissions and further recognize the importance of adopting domestic measures.

We welcome the decision in Dubai by the Montreal Protocol parties to work to address HFCs under the Montreal Protocol, and we support adoption of an ambitious Montreal Protocol HFC phase-down amendment in 2016, and intend to provide additional support through the Multilateral Fund following adoption of an amendment for its implementation.

Given the fact that energy production and use account for around two-thirds of global GHG emissions, we recognize the crucial role that the energy sector has to play in combatting climate change. We remain committed to the elimination of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and encourage all countries to do so by 2025.

Energy

Energy plays a crucial role in sustaining global economic growth. With this in mind, we commit to play a leading role in facilitating energy investments, and encourage relevant stakeholders, despite the increased uncertainty posed by the current energy price levels, to sustain their investments in energy sector, in particular in quality energy infrastructure and in upstream development, so that we can mitigate risks to future growth of global economy. We recognize the important role that the energy system has to play in the implementation of the Paris Agreement. In this regard, we are determined to accelerate our work towards the transition to an energy system that enables a

decarbonization of the global economy. We reiterate our strong support for Mission Innovation and commit to further investments in supporting innovation in energy technologies and encouraging clean and energy efficient products, facilities and buildings, so as to ensure economic growth with reduced GHG emissions. We support the enhanced efforts on energy efficiency and use of renewable energy, including hydro, as well as other domestic resources.

We reaffirm our commitment to continuing the implementations of the energy security principles and actions decided in Brussels in 2014 and Schloss Elmau in 2015, and endorse the Kitakyushu Initiative on Energy Security for Global Growth, as well as welcome the progresses achieved in collaboration with partners including the International Energy Agency (IEA). We welcome the concrete actions to strengthen energy security for natural gas, both pipeline and liquefied natural gas (LNG), including Japan's Strategy for LNG Market Development, the EU Strategy for LNG and gas storage and the gas security plan by the IEA. We reaffirm our commitment to continuous efforts in enhancing well-functioning natural gas markets with greater transparency and flexibility, including relaxation of destination clauses, development of price indices and building sufficient and resilient infrastructure with open access, as well as furthering a strategic view of the LNG supply chain at a global level. We also commit to our continuous work on enhancing cybersecurity in energy sector and strengthening our cooperation in the field of electricity security.

In the context of the ongoing crisis between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, we reiterate that energy should not be used as a means of political coercion or as a threat to security. We welcome the substantial energy policy reforms ongoing in Ukraine, and strongly urge it to pursue further ambitious reform of its energy sector. We also call for enhanced cooperation between the Ukrainian national gas transmission system operator and relevant international peers.

We welcome the steady progress on decommissioning and treatment of contaminated water at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, and Japan's efforts to proceed in an open and transparent manner in close communication with the international community, towards developing accurate global understanding of the situation in Fukushima. In those countries that opt to use nuclear energy, it substantially contributes to the reduction of future GHG emissions and works as a base load energy source. In those countries it is also crucially important to engage the public in science-based dialogue and transparency to inform policymaking. We call upon all countries that opt to use nuclear power to ensure the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation including an independent and effective regulator, and to exchange their expertise and experiences. We welcome the mutual cooperation and information exchange through international organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Nuclear Energy Agency, and the World Association of Nuclear Operators.

Resource Efficiency and the 3Rs

Achieving the sustainable management and efficient use of resources is addressed in the 2030 Agenda and is crucial for the protection of the environment, climate and planet. Having in mind the importance of sustainable materials management and material cycle societies, we endorse the Toyama Framework on Material Cycle. This new framework provides a common vision and a guide for future actions to deepen our efforts on resource efficiency and the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle). We will continue to cooperate through the G7 Alliance on Resource Efficiency. We will work with business and other stakeholders to improve resource efficiency with the aim of also fostering innovation, competitiveness, economic growth and job creation. We encourage all countries to join us in these efforts.

We reaffirm our commitment to address marine litter, recognizing that our efforts on resource efficiency and the 3Rs also contribute to the prevention and reduction of marine lit-

ter, particularly plastic, from land-based sources. Furthermore, we support scientific work to enhance global ocean observation and assessment for the science-based management, conservation and sustainable use of marine resources.

Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The year 2015 marked the dawn of a new era in our approach to poverty reduction and sustainable development in all countries, with the historic adoption of the 2030 Agenda, together with the Paris Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. This agenda integrates in a balanced manner the three dimensions of sustainable development—environmental, social and economic—and applies universally to all countries. Reflecting the international community's unwavering resolve to end poverty and transform the world into a sustainable one by 2030, leaving no one behind, the 2030 Agenda lays the foundation for a more peaceful, stable, inclusive and prosperous international community. To this end, we emphasize the integrated and indivisible nature of the 17 SDGs, being well aware that peace and security, development and respect for human rights are inter-linked and mutually reinforcing, and commit to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, domestically and internationally, in a people-centered and planet-sensitive manner. We urge all countries and stakeholders to engage in this joint endeavor under a revitalized and enhanced global partnership to ensure a multi-stakeholder approach.

We are determined to take ambitious domestic action in order to contribute substantially to the global transition to sustainable economies. In addition to our domestic actions, we commit to support developing countries' efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, with a particular emphasis on the dignity of individuals in vulnerable groups and promoting human security. Important elements in our collective response include: the empowerment of all women and girls and gender equality, global health, quality infrastructure investment, support for youth in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in particular, revitalized response to threats to peace and security, tackling forced displacement and modern slavery, industrial human resource development and inclusive innovation; food security and nutrition, the CONNEX initiative; support for disaster risk reduction including through World Tsunami Awareness Day, support for climate change mitigation and adaptation, energy security and sustainable energy, resource efficiency and 3Rs including addressing marine litter, sustainable forest management and eliminating illegal logging. We also welcome the World Humanitarian Summit.

We affirm our strong commitment to the timely implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development which is an integral part of the 2030 agenda, working in partnership with all stakeholders. Amongst priorities, we highlight the primary importance of domestic resource mobilization and of the creation of a favorable climate capable of stimulating domestic and external private investment, while also reaffirming the essential role that official development assistance (ODA) and other official flows (OOF) play as a catalyst for, and complement to, other sources of financing for development. In this regard, we are resolved to continue pursuing innovative partnerships and financing arrangements to advance sustainable development. We also reiterate our respective ODA commitments, such as the 0.7% ODA/GNI target, as well as our commitment to reverse the declining trend of ODA to the LDCs and to better target ODA towards countries where the needs are greatest.

We affirm that addressing challenges in Africa is central to the realization of the SDGs, recognizing that security, development, climate change and gender equality are interdependent and instrumental to ensuring a prosperous and peaceful Africa. As such, we stand ready to support the promotion of Africa's development aspirations as described in Agenda 2063 and its First-Ten Year Implementation Plan in partnership with the African Union and its members. We do so including through our

bilateral and multilateral partnerships with African countries including the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), the Italy-Africa Ministerial Conference, EU-Africa partnership and the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit. We affirm that TICAD VI to be held on 27 and 28 August, 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya, for the first time in Africa comes at a critical juncture of translating the global vision into actions for Africa.

Food Security and Nutrition

Ending hunger and malnutrition is a fundamental element of the 2030 Agenda. As part of a broader effort to achieve the SDGs, we commit to engage collectively in concrete actions in collaboration with relevant partners and stakeholders towards the achievement of our aim to lift 500 million people in developing countries out of hunger and malnutrition by 2030.

Building on the G7 Broad Food Security and Nutrition Development Approach, we endorse the G7 Vision for Action on Food Security and Nutrition, which outlines collective actions in the priority areas of: (i) empowering women; (ii) improving nutrition through a people-centered approach that recognizes the diverse food security challenges people face across the rural to urban spectrum; and (iii) ensuring sustainability and resilience within agriculture and food systems. We commit to enhance synergies with relevant international initiatives.

We support the development of good practices for global food security and nutrition that are in line with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement on climate change. This could include expanding farming opportunities, revitalizing rural communities, and enhancing production, productivity, responsible investment, trade and sustainability in agriculture and food systems.

We welcome the International Symposium on Food Security and Nutrition to be held in Japan and the Nutrition for Growth Summit.

CONNEX

We commit to intensify our efforts under the CONNEX Initiative, to provide developing country partners with multi-disciplinary and concrete expertise for negotiating complex commercial contracts, focusing initially on the extractives sector. The current downturn in commodity price underlines the importance of negotiating good contracts to help developing countries secure fair revenues from their natural resources. We endorse the CONNEX Guiding Principles towards Sustainable Development, designed to facilitate the mobilization of domestic resources in developing countries, contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. We commit to align CONNEX with existing initiatives to build capacity in developing countries and to improve governance and transparency in extractives sectors. Further progress will be sought in close partnership with relevant stakeholders including through the Negotiation Support Forum established with the OECD and the CONNEX International Conference on Capacity Building and Transparency to be held in Tokyo.

G7 Accountability

We remain committed to holding ourselves to account, in an open and transparent way, for the promises we have made. We welcome the Ise-Shima Progress Report—the third comprehensive report on our development-related commitments. The Report highlights the important contribution that the G7 is making to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Positive achievements are seen in areas such as Health, Food Security, Education and Governance. We will continue to monitor progress against our commitments.

Conclusion

We look forward to meeting under the Presidency of Italy in 2017.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to U.N. Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura. It also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known Da'esh. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on the Death of Former Deputy White House Counsel Cassandra Q. Butts
May 27, 2016

To know Cassandra Butts was to know someone who made you want to be better. And Michelle and I were fortunate enough to count her as a friend for most of our adult lives.

Cassandra and I met as law students, and we quickly discovered a shared passion for jazz—and for public service. It was a passion she'd chase for the rest of her life: on Capitol Hill, at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, at the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and as an adviser of mine, but above all, as a citizen, always pushing, always doing her part to advance the causes of opportunity, civil rights, development, and democracy. Cassandra was someone who put her hands squarely on that "arc of the moral universe" and never stopped doing whatever she could to bend it towards justice.

We lost her this week, at far too young an age. But along with all her friends and family, we find comfort in the knowledge that all the good she did for so many lives on. She made America better. She made so many lives better, including ours. We admired her so much. And we will miss her deeply.

NOTE: The statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as a statement by the President and the First Lady.

The President's Weekly Address
May 28, 2016

Hi, everybody. Right now there are American troops serving in harm's way and standing sentry around the world. There are veterans who have served honorably in times of war and peace and often came home bearing the invisible and visible wounds of war. They may not speak the loudest about their patriotism; they let their actions do that. And the right time to think of these men and women, and thank them for their service and sacrifice, is every day of the year.

Memorial Day, which we'll observe Monday, is different. It's the day we remember those who never made it home, those who never had the chance to take off the uniform and be honored as a veteran. It's the day we stop to reflect with gratitude on the sacrifice of generations who made us more prosperous and free and to think of the loved ones they left behind. Remembering them—searing their stories and their contributions into our collective memory—that's an awesome responsibility. It's one that all of us share as citizens.

As Commander in Chief, I have no more solemn obligation than leading our men and women in uniform: making sure they have what they need to succeed, making sure we only send them into harm's way when it's absolutely necessary. And if they make the ultimate sacrifice—if they give their very lives—we have to do more than honor their memory.

We have to be there for their families. Over the years, Michelle and I have spent quiet moments with the families of the fallen: husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters. They've shared their pain, but also their pride in the sacrifices their loved ones made under our proud flag.

It's up to the rest of us to live our lives in a way that's worthy of these sacrifices. The idea to set aside a Memorial Day each year didn't come from our Government, it came from ordinary citizens who acknowledged that while we can't build monuments to every heroic act of every warrior we lost in battle, we can keep their memories alive by taking one day out of the year to decorate the places where they're buried.

That's something that so many of our fellow Americans are doing this weekend: remembering.

Remembering the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coastguardsmen who died in our defense. Remembering those who remain missing. Remembering that they were our fellow citizens and churchgoers, classmates and children, and more often than not, the best of us.

So this Memorial weekend, I hope you'll join me in acts of remembrance. Lay a flower or plant a flag at a fallen hero's final resting place. Reach out to a Gold Star family in your community and listen to the story they have to tell. Send a care package to our troops overseas, volunteer to make a wounded warrior's day a little easier, or hire a veteran who is ready and willing to serve at home just as they did abroad. Or just pause, take a moment, and offer a silent word of prayer or a public word of thanks.

The debt we owe our fallen heroes is one we can never truly repay. But our responsibility to remember is something we can live up to every day of the year.

Thanks. May God watch over our fallen heroes and their families, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:20 p.m. on May 19 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on May 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 27, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 28. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia
May 30, 2016

The President. Good morning.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. Secretary Carter, General Dunford, Mr. Hallinan, Major General Becker, members of our Armed Forces, veterans, and most of all, our Gold Star families: I'm honored to be with you once again as we pay our respects, as Americans, to those who gave their lives for us all.

Here at Arlington, the deafening sounds of combat have given way to the silence of these sacred hills. The chaos and confusion of battle has yielded to perfect, precise rows of peace. The Americans who rest here and their families—the best of us, those from whom we asked everything—ask of us today only one thing in return: that we remember them.

If you look closely at the white markers that grace these hills, one thing you'll notice is that so many of the years—dates of birth and dates of death—are so close together. They belong to young Americans, those who never lived to be honored as veterans for their service: men who battled their own brothers in Civil War, those who fought as a band of brothers an ocean away, and men and women who redefine heroism for a new generation. There are generals buried beside privates they led. Americans known as dad or mom, some only known to God. As Mr. Hallinan, a marine who then watched over these grounds, has said, "Everyone here is someone's hero."

Those who rest beneath this silence—not only here at Arlington, but at veterans' cemeteries across our country and around the world and all who still remain missing—they didn't speak the loudest about their patriotism. They let their actions do that. Whether they stood up in times of war, signed up in times of peace, or were called up by a draft board, they embodied the best of America.

As Commander in Chief, I have no greater responsibility than leading our men and women in uniform; I have no more solemn obligation sending them into harm's way. I think about this every time I approve an operation as President; every time, as a husband and father, that I sign a condolence letter; every time Michelle and I sit at the bedside of a wounded warrior or grieve and hug members of a Gold Star Family.

Less than 1 percent of our Nation wears the uniform, and so few Americans see this patriotism with their own eyes or know someone who

exemplifies it. But every day, there are American families who pray for the sound of a familiar voice when the phone rings, for the sound of a loved one's letter or e-mail arriving. More than 1 million times in our history, it didn't come. And instead, a car pulled up to the house. And there was a knock on the front door. And the sounds of "Taps" floated through a cemetery's trees.

For us, the living—those of us who still have a voice—it is our responsibility, our obligation, to fill that silence with our love and our support and our gratitude, and not just with our words, but with our actions. For truly remembering and truly honoring these fallen Americans means being there for their parents and their spouses and their children, like the boys and girls here today, wearing red shirts and bearing photos of the fallen. Your moms and dads would be so proud of you. And we are too.

Truly remembering means that after our fallen heroes gave everything to get their battle buddies home, we have to make sure our veterans get everything that they have earned, from good health care to a good job. And we have to do better; our work is never done. We have to be there not only when we need them, but when they need us.

Thirty days before he would be laid to rest a short walk from here, President Kennedy told us that a nation reveals itself not only by the people it produces, but by those it remembers. Not everyone will serve. Not everyone will visit this national sanctuary. But we remember our best in every corner of our country from which they came. We remember them by teaching our children at schools with fallen heroes' names, like Dorie Miller Elementary in San Antonio. Or being good neighbors in communities named after great generals, like McPherson, Kansas. Or when we walk down First Sergeant Bobby Mendez Way in Brooklyn or drive across the Hoover Dam on a bridge that bears Pat Tillman's name.

We reveal ourselves in our words and deeds, but also by the simple act of listening. My fellow Americans, today and every day, listen to the stories these Gold Star families and veterans have to tell. Ask about who he or she was, why they volunteered. Hear from those who loved them about what their smile looked like and their laugh sounded like and the dreams they had for their lives.

Since we gathered here 1 year ago, more than 20 brave Americans have given their lives for the security of our people in Afghanistan. And we pray for them all and for their families. In Iraq, in our fight against ISIL, three Americans have given their lives in combat on our behalf. And today I ask you to remember their stories as well.

Charles Keating IV—Charlie or Chuck or "C–4"—was born into a family of veterans, All-American athletes, and Olympians, even a Gold Medalist. So, naturally, Charlie, and the love of his life, Brooke, celebrated their anniversary on the Fourth of July. She called him the "huge goofball" everybody wanted to be friends with: the adventurer who surfed and spearfished and planned to sail around the world.

When the Twin Towers fell, he was in high school, and he decided to enlist; joined the SEALs because, he told his friends, it was the hardest thing to do. He deployed to Afghanistan and three times to Iraq, earning a Bronze Star for valor. And earlier this month, while assisting local forces in Iraq who had come under attack, he gave his life.

A few days later, one of his platoon mates sent Charlie's parents a letter from Iraq. "Please tell everyone Chuck saved a lot of lives today," it said. He left us "with that big signature smile on his handsome face, as always. Chuck was full of aloha, but was also a ferocious warrior." Today we honor Chief Special Warfare Officer Charles Keating IV.

Louis Cardin was the sixth of seven children, a Californian with an infectious wit who always had a joke at the ready to help someone get through a tough time. When his siblings ran around the house as kids, his mom Pat would yell after them: "Watch that baby's safety margin!" And today, she realizes that what she was really doing was raising a marine. As a teenager, he proudly signed up. Louie graduated high school on a Friday. Three days later,

on Monday morning, the marines came to pick him up. That was 10 years ago. One morning this March, a marine knocked on his mother's door again. On his fifth tour, at a fire base in Iraq, Louie gave his life while protecting the marines under his command.

Putting others before himself was what Louie did best. He chose to live in the barracks with his buddies even when he could have taken a house off base. He volunteered to babysit for friends who needed a date night. He'd just earned a promotion to mentor his fellow marines. When they brought Louie home, hundreds of strangers lined freeway overpasses and the streets of Southern California to salute him. And today we salute Staff Sergeant Louie Cardin.

Joshua Wheeler's sister says he was "exactly what was right about this world. He came from nothing and he really made something of himself." As a kid, Josh was the one who made sure his brother and four half-sisters were dressed and fed and off to school. When there wasn't food in the cupboard, he grabbed his hunting rifle and came back with a deer for dinner. When his country needed him, he enlisted in the Army at age 19.

He deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan 14 times, earned 11 Bronze Stars, four for valor. Last October, as ISIL terrorists prepared to execute 70 hostages, Josh and his fellow Special Ops went in and rescued them. Every single one walked free. "We were already dead," one of the hostages said, "then God sent us a force from the sky." That force was the U.S. Army, including Josh Wheeler.

Josh was the doting dad who wrote notes to his kids in the stacks of books he read. Flying home last summer to be with his wife Ashley who was about to give birth, he scribbled one note in the novel he was reading, just to tell his unborn son he was on his way. Ashley Wheeler is with us here today, holding their 10-month-old son David. Ashley says Josh's memory makes her think about how can she be a better citizen. And she hopes it's what other people think about too. Today, this husband and father rests here, in Arlington, in Section 60. And as Americans, we resolve to be better—better people, better citizens—because of Master Sergeant Joshua Wheeler.

A nation reveals itself not only by the people it produces, but by those it remembers. We do so not just by hoisting a flag, but by lifting up our neighbors. Not just by pausing in silence, but by practicing in our own lives the ideals of opportunity and liberty and equality that they fought for. We can serve others and contribute to the causes they believed in and, above all, keep their stories alive so that one day, when he grows up and thinks of his dad, an American like David Wheeler can tell them, as well, the stories of the lives that others gave for all of us.

We are so proud of them. We are so grateful for their sacrifice. We are so thankful to those families of the fallen. May God bless our fallen and their families. May He bless all of you. And may He forever bless these United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:31 a.m. in the Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., USMC; Patrick K. Hallinan, Superintendent, Arlington National Cemetery; Maj. Gen. Bradley A. Becker, USA, commanding general, National Capital Region and Military District of Washington; Brooke Clark, fiancée, and Charles H. Keating III and Krista Joseph, parents, of Charles Keating IV, USN, who was killed outside Tel Askuf, Iraq, on May 3; and Rachel, Scotty, and Heather Quackenbush, Tatira Wade, and Zack Wheeler, siblings, and Matthew, Zachariah, and Joshua Wheeler, Jr., sons, of M. Sgt. Joshua L. Wheeler, USA, who was killed in Kirkuk Province, Iraq, on October 22, 2015. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks Following a Hurricane Preparedness Briefing at the Federal Emergency Management Agency

May 31, 2016

Well, my important responsibility as President of the United States is to keep our people safe. And that's why I just met with key members of my Homeland Security team, including our FEMA director, Craig Fugate, here at FEMA's National Response Coordination Center. And Craig and his team gave us updates on preparations for the 2016 hurricane season, which starts tomorrow.

All of us have seen the heartbreak, the damage, and in some cases, the loss of life that hurricanes can cause. And as climate continues to change, hurricanes are only going to become more powerful and more devastating. Now, States play the primary role in preparing for and responding to disasters. But our team here works around the clock to make sure that those States and the people living in those States have everything that they need to get the job done.

One of the things that we have learned over the course of the last 7½ years is that government plays a vital role, but it is every citizen's responsibility to be prepared for a disaster. And that means taking proactive steps, like having an evacuation plan, having a fully stocked disaster supply kit. If your local authorities ask you to evacuate, you have to do it. Don't wait.

And so one of the biggest, most important messages that we're going to be delivering throughout hurricane season is that you cannot judge the dangerousness of a hurricane based on the fact that in the past it dissipated or it missed you. If your local authorities say that you need to start evacuating, you need to start evacuating and get it done. Because, oftentimes, despite the enormous progress that we've made technologically and in terms of forecasts, the way that urban centers are designed today, even in areas that are not big metropolises, evacuations take time and people have to respond.

And what we've been seeing is some public complacency slipping in: a large portion of people not having preparedness kits, not having evacuation plans. We've been stagnant a little bit with respect to the number of people, the percentage of people, who respond to an evacuation order. All that has to pick up, because we want to make sure that, although it's hard to prevent property damage, that we are doing everything we can to prevent loss of life.

If you need information about how to put together an evacuation plan, how to put together a disaster preparedness kit, as Craig said, we've got an app for everything now. We have a FEMA app in English and in Spanish to help you prepare your family for a disaster. You can update the National Weather Service alerts. You can get safety tips for more than 20 kinds of hazards. It provides you directions to nearby shelters.

So I would encourage every American, no matter where you live, to stay vigilant, to check ready.gov. I will repeat that: That is ready.gov. Check that regularly to make sure your family is prepared for severe weather.

Finally, I just want to thank all the outstanding public servants not only at FEMA, but at NOAA, which does a lot of our forecasting. Our National Hurricane Center—Rick Knabb does a great job. Some of you guys have seen him on TV when things happen. When I came into office, I think FEMA was an organization that was still, as Craig put it, wrapped around the axle. It now exemplifies the extraordinary role that effective Government agencies and the people who work there can play in making our lives better, in saving lives, in helping people pick themselves back up after they've gotten hit with a tremendous blow.

So I want to publicly acknowledge not only the outstanding work that Craig has done, the leadership that he's provided here at FEMA, but everybody at FEMA, because they have dealt with everything: hurricanes, storms, tornadoes, flooding, fires. And in every situation, FEMA has been there on time, ready. And I think it's a testament to their effectiveness that

very rarely, if ever, have you heard a complaint from a Governor or a mayor or a local community about a lack of responsiveness when it comes to FEMA, no matter what the disaster is.

But having said all that, having been really proud of the way that FEMA has operated and all the agencies involved in disaster preparedness have operated over the last 7 years—7½ years, what we also know is, it only takes one. It just takes one big disaster that—for us to really see some severe impacts. What we're always worried about is—are the things we don't know, things we can't anticipate, things that we haven't seen before. And that is why it's so important to make sure that every American, every family participate actively in getting prepared. And if we do that, then we're going to have the kind of resilience that we're all looking for.

So thank you very much for the great work that all of you are doing. And we're going to keep on being forward leaning throughout this hurricane season to make sure that we're doing everything we can. We can't control the weather, but we can control our responses to it. And you've got a Government here who's ready to help.

Thanks, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. in the M1 Conference Room. In his remarks, he referred to Richard Knabb, Director, National Hurricane Center.

Remarks Honoring the NCAA Men's Basketball Champion Villanova University Wildcats

May 31, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, welcome to the White House. And I guess it is the blue-and-white house today—[*laughter*]—because we're giving it up for the 2016 NCAA Champion Villanova Wildcats!

Now, you should know that we have some big 'Nova fans here, from both sides of the aisle in Congress. We also want to acknowledge Villanova president, Reverend Peter Donohue, who is here. Athletic Director Mark Jackson, who capped off his first year as athletic director with a national championship—pretty good job. [*Applause*] Pretty good.

Unfortunately, perhaps the most important 'Nova grad here, Dr. Jill Biden, could not be here. I think she may be teaching, but her husband Joe wanted me to remind you that he picked 'Nova to win it all. [*Laughter*] This is the type of wise counsel that you are looking for from a Vice President. [*Laughter*] Unfortunately, I didn't follow his counsel, and so my bracket was busted. [*Laughter*]

We have the best dressed man in college basketball—the George Clooney of coaches—[*laughter*]—Jay Wright. And today we celebrate a remarkable team that worked tirelessly to make Coach look good in terms of his job and not just his wardrobe. [*Laughter*] His tailor and stylist could not make it, but we do have his basketball players here. [*Laughter*]

So Coach Wright and this team treated us to as memorable a run and as memorable a championship game as I can remember. We'll talk more about that game in a second, but these Wildcats were about more than just one moment or one shot. They had unbelievable defense. They had great clutch shooting. A senior class that won more games than any group in Wildcats history. They had a stable of talented players who were as happy hitting the deck for a loose ball as they were cutting down the nets.

You had Daniel Ochefu, a.k.a. "the Chef"—[*laughter*]—who became just the seventh player in program history to score 1,000 points and grab 900 boards—pretty good. Also not afraid to do the little things, we saw him grab that mop right in the middle of the game. [*Laughter*]

We had Josh Hart who led the Wildcats in scoring. Congratulations, Josh. Josh, where'd you go to school?

Guard Josh Hart. Sidwell Friends.

The President. Sidwell Friends School. Well, my daughter will be graduating from there next week, which makes me cry when I talk about it, so I'm not going to talk about it. [*Laughter*] But it was good to see a Sidwell kid do well.

Kris Jenkins—a.k.a. "Big Smoove"—[*laughter*]—had—[*applause*]. He learned how to shoot from his mom. Moms know what they're talking about. And then, there is Ryan Arcidiacono. Now, I just sped through that in case I didn't say it right. [*Laughter*] "Barack Obama" is tough, but "Arcidiacono"—man, that's a lot of vowels in there, so we're just going to call him Arch. [*Laughter*] A captain since his freshman year, wore the blue and white in more games than any Wildcat ever, and went out in style as the Most Outstanding Player of the Final Four. So we are very, very proud of him. Give him a big round of applause.

But more than any individual honor, this team possessed something that the coaches preached from day one, and that's attitude. As Coach Wright says, "In life, you cannot control what happens to you, but you do control how you respond to it."

And that's how they bounced back from disappointing tournaments these past few years. That's how they rolled through the first three rounds by an average of 24 points, beat Kansas to punch their ticket to the Final Four. In Houston, they blew the doors off Oklahoma by a Final Four record 44-point margin.

All of which set up an unbelievable showdown with the Tar Heels—it might be maybe the best title game of all time. Just the last few seconds could be a documentary—you had an unbelievable double-clutch circus shot from Marcus Paige on UNC's team. A lot of teams would have had their spirit broken. Wildcats, they took control, they responded. And on a play called Nova, Kris took a pass from Arch and pulled up a few steps behind the line and shot this team into basketball lore. That was a good shot. [*Laughter*] You know, it was like a Christian Laettner shot. It was like a Jimmy-V.-running-up-and-down-the-court shot. Charles Barkley apparently jumped out of his seat, which—[*laughter*]—he doesn't do very often these days. [*Laughter*]

Coach—legendary Coach Massimino, who led their Wildcats to their first title 31 years ago, obviously couldn't be prouder. Coach Wright, on the other hand, played it cool—[*laughter*]—just turned around, shook hands like nothing happened. [*Laughter*] But I know inside, he was pretty excited. [*Laughter*]

So this is a team for the ages, on and off the court. Their grades ranked in the top 10 percent nationally. [*Applause*] That's worth applauding. All five seniors graduated. In fact, ever since nineteen—the 1970s, the Wildcats have graduated every 4-year player. And that's the kind of record that you really want.

They're also involved in the Philadelphia community, serving meals for those in need, supporting the Special Olympics. A few days after their win, Arch and the Chef heard about a fan—a small boy battling cancer—who could use a boost. So without fanfare, they snuck into the boy's basement and hid in his playhouse to surprise him, which seems a little scary. [*Laughter*] But their hearts were in the right place.

And that's what we saw all year from this team: the heart of a champion. So congratulations to the Wildcats for an unbelievable season.

And with that, let me give the podium very quickly to Coach Wright.

Head Coach Jay Wright. Mr. President, after the championship, we had a big press conference, but nothing as big as this. This is——

The President. There's a lot of cameras around here.

Coach Wright. This is big time. And on behalf of our entire 'Nova family, I want to thank you and your staff for inviting us to the White House. This is a great day for Villanova University, and you invited all the politicians and everybody connected to Villanova. We love having them here. Thank you for doing that. And your staff has been incredible to us.

You're a great leader, and we want two of our leaders, Ryan Arcidiacono and Daniel Ochefu, to share with you the jersey—44th President of the United States—that we wore

this year at Pearl Harbor. And it was on Pearl Harbor Day, and we really want to thank you. And it says on there, "For your great leadership, your service to our country, you're truly a great role model for our young men." We want them to be great leaders like you. And we thank you for everything you do for our country, and we welcome you to the 'Nova nation with your Villanova jersey.

The President. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:23 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden; actor George T. Clooney; Daniel Ochefu, Kris Jenkins, Patrick Farrell, and Kevin Rafferty, forwards, Ryan Arcidiacono and Henry Lowe, guards, and Roland Massimino, former head coach, Villanova University men's basketball team; Marcus Paige, guard, University of North Carolina men's basketball team; Felicia Jenkins, mother of Mr. Jenkins; former National Basketball Association players Christian D. Laettner and Charles Barkley; and 4-year-old Havertown, PA, resident Blaise Davis.

Remarks in Elkhart, Indiana
June 1, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello, hello, hello! Can everybody please give Kelly a big round of applause for the great introduction?

Oh, it is good to be back in Elkhart. Great to be back at Concord High School. Go Minutemen! I brought a couple of friends of with me: Your Senator, Joe Donnelly, is here; your mayor, Tim Neese, is here. I wanted to congratulate everyone graduating tomorrow. I just met a couple of the valedictorians, who seemed like outstanding young ladies. My older daughter Malia graduates next week. So if there are any parents here, I hope you can give me some pointers on how not to cry too much at the ceremony and embarrass her. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Carry some tissues!

The President. That's what I'm going to do! If you've got a chair, sit down. Relax. I'm going to—I've got some stuff to say here. I—[*applause*].

Yes, so I'm not going to talk about the fact that my daughter leaving me is just breaking my heart. I'm not here to talk about that. I'm here to talk about the economy.

I don't know that—if you've noticed, but this is an election year. [*Laughter*] And it's a more colorful election season than most. It's been a little unusual.

Audience member. One more term!

The President. No, I can't do that. [*Laughter*] The Constitution prohibits it, but more importantly, Michelle prohibits it. [*Laughter*]

Now, one of the reasons we're told this has been an unusual election year is because people are anxious and uncertain about the economy. And our politics are a natural place to channel that frustration. So I wanted to come to the heartland, to the Midwest, back to close to my hometown to talk about that anxiety, that economic anxiety, and what I think it means. And what I've got to say really boils down to two points, although I'm going to take a long time making these two points. [*Laughter*]

Number one, America's economy is not just better than it was 8 years ago, it is the strongest, most durable economy in the world. That's point number one.

Point number two: We can make it even stronger and expand opportunity for even more people. But to do that, we have to be honest about what our real challenges are, and we've got to make some smart decisions going forward.

Now, Elkhart is a good place to have this conversation, because some of you remember, this was the first city I visited as President. I had been in office just 3 weeks when I came here. We were just a few months into what turned out to be the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes. Our businesses were losing 800,000 jobs a month. Our auto industry was about to go under. Our families were losing their savings and their health insurance, and as Kelly pointed out, they were in danger of los-

ing their homes. And Elkhart was hit harder than most. Unemployment here would peak at 19.6 percent. That means nearly one in five people here were out of work. And I told you then that I was going to have your back and we were going to work hard to bring this economy back.

So what's happened since then? Unemployment in Elkhart has fallen to around 4 percent. At the peak of the crisis, nearly 1 in 10 homeowners in the State of Indiana were either behind on their mortgages or in foreclosure; today, it's 1 in 30. Back then, only 75 percent of your kids graduated from high school; tomorrow 90 percent of them will. The auto industry just had its best year ever. And the "RV Capital of the World" is doing its part. The industry is set to ship nearly 400,000 RVs this year, which will be an alltime record.

So that's progress. And it's thanks to you: to the hard work you put in and the sacrifices you made for your families and the way that you looked out for each other. But we also wouldn't have come this far, Elkhart would not have come this far, if we hadn't made a series of smart decisions—my administration, a cooperative Congress—decisions we made together early on in my administration.

We decided to help the auto industry to restructure, and we helped families refinance their homes.

Audience member. Yes, you did!

The President. We decided to invest in job training so that folks who lost their jobs could retool. We decided to invest in things like high-tech manufacturing and clean energy and infrastructure so that entrepreneurs wouldn't just bring back the jobs that we had lost, but create new and better jobs, and folks who had lost work from the construction industry because the housing market had collapsed could go back to work rebuilding America.

And we can see the results not just here in Elkhart, but across the Nation. By almost every economic measure, America is better off than when I came here at the beginning of my Presidency. That's the truth. [*Applause*] That's true. It's true. It's true. Over the past 6 years, our businesses have created more than 14 million new jobs. That's the longest stretch of consecutive private sector job growth in our history. We've seen the first sustained manufacturing growth since the 1990s. We cut unemployment in half, years before a lot of economists thought we could. We've cut the oil that we buy from foreign countries by more than half, doubled the clean energy that we produce. For the first time ever, more than 90 percent of the country has health insurance. So—[*applause*].

In fact, a poll that was out just last week says that two out of three Americans think their own family's financial situation is in pretty good shape. But we know a lot of people are still feeling stressed about their economic future. The pundits, they say one of the reasons the Republican Party has picked the candidate that it has——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, no booing. We're voting, we're not booing.

But if you watch the talking heads on TV, they'll say, the reason that folks are angry is because nobody has paid enough attention to the plight of working Americans in communities like these. That's what they say.

Now, look, I'm the first to admit my Presidency hasn't fixed everything. We've had setbacks. We've had false starts. We've, frankly, been stuck with a Congress recently that's opposed pretty much everything that we've tried to do. But I also know that I've spent every single day of my Presidency focused on what I can do to grow the middle class and increase jobs and boost wages and make sure every kid in America gets the same kind of opportunities Michelle and I did. I know that. I know that communities haven't been—communities like Elkhart haven't been forgotten in my White House. And the results prove that our focus has paid off. Elkhart proves it.

Now, where we haven't finished the job, where folks have good reason to feel anxious, is addressing some of the longer term trends in the economy—that started long before I was elected—that make working families feel less secure. These are trends that have been happening for decades now and that we've got to

do more to reverse. Let me be clear about what those are.

Despite the drop in unemployment, wages are still growing too slowly, and that makes it harder to pay for college or save for retirement. Inequality is still too high. The gap between rich and poor is bigger now than it's been just about any time since the 1920s. The rise of global competition and automation of more and more jobs; the race of technology—all these trends have left many workers behind, and they've let a few at the top collect extraordinary wealth and influence like never before. And that kind of changes our politics. So all these trends make it easy for people to feel that somehow the system is rigged and that the American Dream is increasingly hard to reach for ordinary folks. And there are plenty of politicians that are preying on that frustration for headlines and for votes.

Now, I am a politician for another 6 months or so, but I'm not running again.

Audience members. Aww.

The President. Yes. [*Laughter*]

Audience members. Four more years!

The President. Besides—no, look. Besides, while I may have won the State of Indiana just barely in 2008, I know I lost the vote in Elkhart. [*Laughter*] I definitely got whupped here in 2012. I know I don't poll all that well in this county. So I'm not here looking for votes.

I am here because I care deeply, as a citizen, about making sure we sustain and build on all the work that communities like yours have done to bring America back over these last 7½ years. And I came here precisely because this county votes Republican. [*Laughter*] That's one of the reasons I came here. Because if the economy is really what's driving this election, then it's going to be voters like you that have to decide between two very different visions of what's going to help strengthen our middle class. You're going to have to make that decision.

So let me be as straight as I can be about the choice of economic policies that you are going to face. And I'm going to start with the story that not every Republican, but most Republican candidates up and down the ticket are telling. And it goes something like this—and I think this is pretty fair, and if you don't, then you can look it up. So their basic story is: America's working class, America's middle class—families like yours—have been victimized by a big, bloated Federal Government run by a bunch of left-wing elitists like me. And the Government is taking your hard-earned tax dollars, and it's giving them to freeloaders and welfare cheats. And we're strangling business with endless regulations. And this Federal Government is letting immigrants and foreigners steal whatever jobs Obamacare hasn't killed yet. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Don't believe it!

The President. No, no, look, I'm being serious here. I mean, that's the story that's been told. And I haven't turned on Fox News or listened to conservative talk radio yet today, but I've turned them on enough over these past 7½ years to know I'm not exaggerating in terms of their story. That's the story they tell. You can hear it from just about every Member of Congress on the other side of the aisle. And instead of telling you what they're for, they've defined their economic agenda by what they're against, and that's mainly being against me. And it's—and their basic message is antigovernment, anti-immigrant, antitrade, and, let's face it, it's antichange.

Audience member. Come on now!

The President. And look, a lot of people believe it. And if what they were saying were true, I suppose it would make sense to run on a platform of just rolling back everything we've done over these past 7½ years, and happy days would be here again. [*Laughter*] If what they were saying was true, then just being against whatever it is that we've done might make sense. But what they're saying isn't true. And if we're going to fix what's really wrong with the economy, we've got to understand that.

So let me just do some quick myth busting. [*Laughter*] And I'm going to start with the biggest myth, which is that the Federal Government keeps growing and growing and growing and wasting your money and giving your tax dollars to people who don't deserve it.

Now, here's the truth. You can look it up; these journalists here, they can do some fact checking. As a share of the economy, we spend less on domestic priorities outside of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—we spend less than we did when Ronald Reagan was President. When President Reagan or George W. Bush held this job, our deficits got bigger. When Bill Clinton and I have held this job, deficits have gotten smaller. Our deficits have not grown these past 7½ years, we've actually cut the deficit by almost 75 percent.

Moreover, there are fewer families on welfare than in the 1990s. Funding has been frozen for two decades. So there's not a whole bunch of giveaways going on right now. Aside from our obligation to care for the elderly and Americans with disabilities, the vast majority of people who get help from the Federal Government are families of all backgrounds who are working, striving to get back on their feet, striving to get back into the middle class. And sometimes, yes, their kids need temporary help from food stamps when mom and dad are between jobs. But look, these kids didn't cause the financial crisis. These kids aren't spending us into bankruptcy. They're not what's holding back the middle class. And by the way, neither is Obamacare.

Let's look at the numbers. Again, I just want to—I'm just giving facts here. I will have some opinions later, but right now I'm just giving facts. [*Laughter*] I signed the Affordable Care Act into law over 6 years ago. Since then, our businesses have created jobs every single month. We did this while covering 20 million Americans who didn't have health insurance; ending discrimination against preexisting conditions for everybody, including those who had health insurance; dramatically—[*applause*]—and dramatically slowing the rate at which health care costs were going up.

In the decade before Obamacare, employer-based premiums grew by an average of 8 percent a year. That meant you were paying that much more every year for health insurance. Last year, they grew by 4 percent, half as fast as they were growing. That doesn't mean you're happy about the 4 percent, but it wasn't 8. [*Laughter*] Today, the average family's health insurance premium is $2,600 less than it would have been if premiums had kept on going up at the pace before Obamacare. And by the way, just for folks here in Indiana, last year, most Hoosiers who shopped around for Obamacare on healthcare.gov found plans that cost 75 bucks a month or less. For the millions of Americans who buy on healthcare.gov—they get tax credits to help them pay for it—the average price increase this year has been four bucks a month. It hasn't been a double-digit percentage hike. Four bucks a month.

But my bigger point is to bust this myth of crazy, liberal, Government spending. Government spending is not what is squeezing the middle class.

Myth number two is the notion that my administration has killed jobs through overregulation. And back in the sixties and the seventies, Government was adding all kinds of regulations: rules protecting workers' rights, rules protecting the environment. And these regulations to improve public health and safety, they didn't crush the economic growth that took place back in the sixties and the seventies, and they're not crushing economic growth now.

I've issued fewer regulations than my predecessor. I've issued fewer Executive orders than any two-term President since Ulysses S. Grant. That's a long time ago. The regulations that we have issued—rules to protect our air and our water, rules to keep families from getting cheated when buying a house or investing their savings—those rules have benefited our economy a lot more than they've cost. They've helped families, they've helped the middle class; they haven't hurt them.

Here's myth number three: Other countries are killing us on trade. Now, it is true that a lot of supporters of trade deals in the past sometimes oversold all the good that it was going to do for the economy. The truth is, the benefits of trade are usually widely spread. It's one of the reasons why you can buy that big, flat-screen TV for a couple hundred bucks—[*laughter*]—and why the costs of a lot of basic necessities have gone down. Some parts of the economy, like the agricultural sector or the

tech sector have really done well with trade. Some sectors and communities have been hurt by foreign competition.

And what's also true is, sometimes the pain of a plant closing here in America is magnified when you know that other countries are cheating. They're keeping American goods out of their markets; they're unfairly subsidizing their businesses to undercut our businesses. And a lot of the worst violators, they don't even have trade deals with us at all.

So what—here's what we've done. Over the past 7 years, we've brought more trade cases against other countries for cheating than anybody else. Every case that's been decided, America has won. That's what we've done: making sure that we've got a level playing field.

But the truth is, trade has helped our country a lot more than it's hurt us. Exports helped lead us out of the recession. Companies that export pay workers higher wages than folks who don't export. And anybody who says that somehow shutting ourselves off from trade is going to bring jobs back, they're just not telling the truth.

In fact, most of the manufacturing jobs that we lost over the past decade, they weren't the result of trade deals. They were the result of technology and automation that lets businesses make more stuff with fewer workers. If you go into an auto plant these days, used to need several thousand workers, now they need a thousand workers to produce the same number of cars, just because there are robots and there are machines that have replaced a lot of the work. That's true in offices too, by the way. Think about bank tellers, the last time you dealt with one of those, because now you've got ATM machines.

So we can't put technology back in a box any more than we can cut ourselves off from the global supply chain. All the RVs that are manufactured right here, I guarantee you, some of those parts came from someplace else. And then, we sell them back to other places—other parts of the world.

And no matter how many tariffs we're threatening to slap on other countries' goods, no matter how many trade wars we start saying we're going to put in place, that's not going to help middle class families here. In fact, independent economists say a trade war would trigger another recession and cost millions of jobs. So when you hear somebody threatening to cut off trade and saying that that's standing up for American workers, that's just not true.

Here's the fourth myth: that immigrants are taking all of our jobs. Now I want to look—let's look at the numbers. Right now the number of people trying to cross our border illegally is near its lowest level in 40 years. [*Applause*] It's near its lowest level in 40 years. It's lower than when I came into office—than it was before I came into office, it's lower than during Ronald Reagan's time. It's true that new immigrants sometimes compete for service and construction jobs. But they also start about 30 percent of all new businesses in America.

Audience member. Yes!

The President. Everybody thinks that immigrants come here and then they're getting all this stuff from the government. Immigrants pay a lot more in taxes than they receive in services.

But most importantly, immigrants are not the main reason wages haven't gone up for middle class families. Those decisions are made in the boardrooms of companies where top CEOs are getting paid more than 300 times the income of the average worker. So deporting 11 million immigrants—not only is that a fantasy that would cost taxpayers billions of dollars and tear families apart and just, logistically, would be impossible. Even if it were possible, it wouldn't do anything to seriously help the middle class.

Audience member. The Donald is crazy! [*Laughter*]

The President. Mixing—so, so—now, what would help is if we fixed our immigration system the way I've proposed so that everybody plays by the rules, so that we've got strong border security. But we also are making sure that families who have been here, like, 10 years, 20 years, that they're out of the shadows, they're paying taxes, they're going through a background check. That would grow our economy faster. That would shrink our deficits further.

We just need a Congress that's willing to make it happen.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. We need a Congress that's willing to make it happen.

So look, the—here's my main point: The primary story that Republicans have been telling about the economy is not supported by the facts. It's just not. They repeat it a lot—[*laughter*]—but it's not supported by the facts. But they say it anyway. Now, why is that? It's because it has worked to get them votes, at least at the congressional level.

Because—and here, look, I'm just being blunt with you. By telling hard-working, middle class families that the reason they're getting squeezed is because of some moochers at the bottom of the income ladder, because of minorities or because of immigrants or because of public employees or because of feminists—[*laughter*]—or because of—because poor folks who aren't willing to work, they've been able to promote policies that protect powerful special interests and those who are at the very top of the economic pyramid. That's just the truth.

I hope you don't mind me being blunt about this, but I've been listening to this stuff for a while now. [*Laughter*] And I'm concerned when I watch the direction of our politics. I mean, we have been hearing this story for decades: tales about welfare queens, talking about takers, talking about the "47 percent." It's the story that is broadcast every day on some cable news stations, on right-wing radio, it's pumped into cars and bars and VFW halls all across America and right here in Elkhart.

And if you're hearing that story all the time, you start believing it. It's no wonder people think big Government is the problem. No wonder public support for unions is so low. No wonder that people think that the deficit has gone up under my Presidency when it's actually gone down. No wonder that—they did a survey, a lot of White Americans think reverse discrimination is as big a problem as discrimination against minorities, even though Black unemployment is twice as high as White unemployment. And the typical Hispanic woman makes 55 cents for every dollar a White man earns, and there are only a handful of women running Fortune 500 companies.

But that's the story that's been told. And I'm here to say, Elkhart, 7½ years since I first came here, we've got to challenge the assumptions behind this economic story. And the reason is, it has ended up dividing Americans who actually have common economic interests and should be working together for a better deal from the people who serve them. And it's made people cynical about government, and it's kept working families from pushing our political system to actually address our economic challenges in a realistic way. Families of all races and all backgrounds deserve higher wages. Families of all races and all backgrounds deserve quality health care and decent retirement savings. Every child in this country deserves an education that lets them dream bigger than the circumstances in which they're born.

Audience member. We love you, Obama!

The President. You know, look, look—[*laughter*]. In today's economy, we can't put up walls around America. We're not going to round up 11 million people. We're not going to put technology back in the box. We're not going to rip away hard-earned rights of women and minorities and Americans with disabilities so that they're able to more fairly and fully participate in the workplace. These are permanent fixtures in our economy. And rolling them back will not help folks in Elkhart or anyplace else.

And if we're going to transform our politics so that they're actually responsive to working families and are actually growing the middle class, then we've got to stop pitting working Americans against each other. We're going to have to come together and choose a vision of America where everybody gets a fair shot and everybody does their fair share and everybody plays by the same set of rules. And that's the vision that made progress possible over these last 7 years. And that's what's going to lead us forward now.

Now, this isn't a State of the Union Address; I already gave my last one. [*Laughter*] But in the time remaining, I do want to offer some suggestions that I think would actually help

give everybody who works hard a fair shot at opportunity and security in today's economy. Yes—and you've heard some of these things before, but it's worth repeating because they're true.

Number one, let's get wages rising faster. Now, here's the good news: Wages are actually growing at a rate of about 3 percent so far this year. That's the good news. Working Americans are finally getting a little bigger piece of the pie. But we've got to accelerate that. That's why, for example, my administration recently took new action to help millions of workers finally collect the overtime pay that they have earned. That's going to help. But we should also raise the minimum wage high enough so that if somebody is working full time, they're not living in poverty. Some States, some cities have done it, but we need a national law. We should make sure women get equal pay for equal work. That's something we should all agree on. [*Applause*] That shouldn't be a partisan issue. That shouldn't be a partisan issue. Republicans got daughters too. [*Laughter*] They shouldn't want them to get paid less than somebody's boy for doing the same job. If you care about working families getting a bigger paycheck, then that's a clear choice for you right there.

We also need to give workers a bigger voice in the economy. Now, one of the reasons that wages have not grown faster over the last couple of decades is because some politicians, some businesses, some laws have undermined the ability of workers to bargain for a better deal, and that needs to change. We always talk about—folks talking about the good old days. Well, let me tell you something, in the good old days, 50 years ago, more than one in four American workers belonged to a union—one in four.

The reason all those manufacturing jobs that everybody wants to get back, the reason they paid well was because folks were unionized in those plants. And they not only negotiated for good benefits—good wages, but also good benefits, and they had a pension plan that they could count on. So it used to be one in four were members of unions. Today, it's about 1 in 10. And it's not a coincidence that as union membership shrank, inequality grew, and wages stagnated, and workers got a smaller share of the economic pie.

So I just want everybody to remember this: A lot of those good jobs people miss, a lot of those good manufacturing jobs that everybody is always talking about, those were union jobs. And when I—it's great to get all riled up about low wages and lousy workers' standards in others' countries, but let's get riled up about that stuff here too. America should not be changing our laws to make it harder for workers to organize, we should be changing our laws to make it easier and encourage new forms of worker organizations that can give them more of a voice and more of a say in the economy.

And by the way, I want to be clear: There are a lot of terrific business leaders who have figured out that doing right by their workers isn't just good for their workers, it's good for their bottom line, because that means they've got more customers. It means their communities are doing better. There are plenty of business owners right here in Elkhart who exhibited that spirit throughout the recession. So we should lift up good corporate citizens like that so that more businesses across America follow their lead. But that's priority number one: getting wages to grow faster.

Priority number two: We need to better prepare our children and our workers for the high-tech, high-wage jobs of tomorrow. Now, we actually know what works here, we just don't do it. We know early childhood education works. And we should invest in smart ways of doing it across the country, especially because child-care costs take up a huge share of a family budget. We know that we have to make college more affordable and job training more available. And one way to do that is to provide 2 years of community college for free for every responsible student. There are mayors and there are Governors who are already doing good work on these issues across party lines. They've shown the way. Now we need Congress to do the same.

Number three, one of the reasons wages grew so quickly in the fifties and the sixties and

the seventies is because we had a Government that put people to work building highways and building bridges and building airports and exploring new frontiers in space and science and investing in research and development. And it led to countless new discoveries and innovations, and it educated a new generation of workers with public colleges where tuition was low, and a GI bill.

And I just have to say, too often, Republicans in Congress are blocking investments like these for no other reason than this cult of small government that they keep repeating. But you know what, it's been a drag on the economy. It made us recover slower than we should have. It's been a drag on jobs. It's been a drag on wages. And it's penny wise and pound foolish, because if the economy is growing slower, you take in less tax dollars. You'd be better off putting people back to work. Then, they're paying taxes, the economy is getting stronger, and deficits can actually go down. We should be making smart investments that help us all succeed.

Fourth, in the new economy, we've got to make it easier for working Americans to save for retirement or bounce back from a lost job. Because let's be honest, most Americans don't have the same benefits package or job security as their Member of Congress. [*Laughter*] I'm just saying. They've got a pretty good deal.

That was part of what Obamacare is all about, right? What it did was fill in the gaps so that if you lost your job or you went back to school or you decided to start a new business, that you could go and compare and buy quality, affordable coverage and get a tax credit for it. And despite the predictions, it's working. And by the way, it would work ever better if we had more Governors and legislators willing to do what Mike Pence did, to his credit, and expand Medicaid. That was a decision that helped more than 300,000 Hoosiers.

So we need fewer folks in Congress who side with the special interests. We need more who are willing to work with us to lower health care costs, give us the funding we need to fight public health challenges like Zika and the opioid epidemic. Joe Donnelly is working on that diligently. You know? So those are things we could get done that would relieve a lot of worry for a lot of families.

And then, we have to tackle retirement security. It—that's something that keeps a lot of people up at night. That's why we've taken actions already to make it easier for more workers to save through their jobs, to make sure that when you do save, you're getting advice that's not in Wall Street's best interest, but in your best interest.

But look, let's face it, a lot of Americans don't have retirement savings. Even if they've got an account set up, they just don't have enough money at the end of the month to save as much as they'd like because they're just barely paying the bills. Fewer and fewer people have pensions they can really count on, which is why Social Security is more important than ever. We can't afford to weaken Social Security, we should be strengthening Social Security. And not only do we need to strengthen its long-term health, it's time we finally made Social Security more generous and increased its benefits so that today's retirees and future generations get the dignified retirement that they've earned. And we could start paying for it by asking the wealthiest Americans to contribute a little bit more. They can afford it. I can afford it.

A fifth way to make the new economy work for everybody is actually to make sure trade works for us and not against us. Again, walling ourselves off from other countries, that's not going to do it. A lot of tough talk that doesn't mean anything is not going to do it. Here's what will make a difference: Making sure other countries raise their labor standards, raise their environmental standards to levels that we set. And that's what we did with this trade deal we call Trans-Pacific Partnership. We negotiated with 11 other countries. If you don't like NAFTA, this TPP trade deal overhauls NAFTA with enforceable, much stronger labor and environmental standards, which means that they won't undercut us as easily.

If you don't want China to set the rules for the 21st century—and they're trying—then TPP makes sure that we set the rules. So the choice is simple: If you want to help China,

then you shouldn't pass this trade deal that we negotiated. If you want to help America, you need to pass it. Because it's going to cut taxes that other countries put on our products. It raises other countries' standards to ours. That's how we're going to help middle class families. That's how we secure better wages for our workers. And that's how we compete on a level playing field, and when we're on a level playing field, America wins every time—every time.

I'm going to make one last suggestion, and that is making sure the economy works for everybody by strengthening, and not weakening, the rules that keep Wall Street in check and goes after folks who avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

Now, after the financial crisis, we passed the toughest Wall Street reforms in history. We passed the toughest Wall Street reforms in history, and by the way, the bank bailout that everybody was mad about? They had to pay back every dime, and they did, with interest. And then, we passed laws to make sure we didn't have something like that happen again. And they're making a difference. The biggest banks have to carry twice the amount of capital that they did before the crisis. That makes another crisis less likely. We've got new tools to guard against another "too big to fail" situation. We've put in place a new consumer watchdog that has already secured more than $10 billion for families who were cheated by irresponsible lenders or irresponsible credit card practices.

And guess what? Since—ever since we passed this thing, the big banks—working with a lot of Members of Congress on the other side of the aisle—they have teamed up to try to roll back these rules every single year. Every year, they've been trying to roll them back. And the Republican nominee for President has already said he'd dismantle all these rules that we passed. That is crazy. [*Laughter*] Have we—let it—no, look, I mean, sometimes—I'll be honest with you, sometimes, I just don't get it. [*Laughter*] How it is that somebody could propose that we weaken regulations on Wall Street? Have we really forgotten what just happened 8 years ago? It hasn't been that long ago. And because of their reckless behavior, you got hurt. And the notion that you would vote for anybody who would now allow them to go back to doing the same stuff that almost broke our economy's back makes no sense.

I don't care whether you're a Republican or a Democrat or an Independent, why would you do that? Less oversight on Wall Street would only make another crisis more likely. Letting credit card companies write their own rules, that's only going to hurt working families. It sure as heck wouldn't make the middle class more secure. How can you say you're for the middle class and then you want to tear down these rules?

We've also been cracking down on tax loopholes, then—like the ones that allow corporations to change their addresses; they say they're an overseas company, even though they're all located here, so that they don't have to pay taxes in America. We've cracked down on tax cheats who are trying to hide their wealth in offshore accounts. You don't get to avoid paying your taxes. Why should they?

But I've got to say, the folks on the other side of the aisle have opposed our efforts to close these loopholes. How do they explain it? When big corporations and wealthy individuals don't pay their fair share of taxes—and by the way, a lot of people do, so I'm not painting with a broad brush here, but there are a lot of folks who don't—when they don't pay their fair share of taxes, it means either you're paying more or it means we don't have enough revenue to support things like rebuilding our roads or funding our public universities, which means tuition goes up, and then you're trying to figure out how to pay for your kid's college education.

We should have closed these loopholes a long time ago, and Lord knows, I have tried every year in my budget. We should have used some of the savings that we get from them paying their fair share to give tax breaks that would actually help working families pay for childcare or would help you send your kids to college or would help you save for retirement.

The point is, if we want a strong middle class, our Tax Code should reflect that. My first term, we cut taxes by $3,600 for the typical

middle class family. Middle class families have paid lower Federal income tax rates during my Presidency than during any other time since the 1950s—that's this big-spending, liberal, tax-and-spend Democrat. That's the truth. Look it up.

But the wealthiest Americans are still paying far lower rates than they used to. When I ran for office, I said we'd reverse the tax cuts that had been put in place by the previous President and Congress on—for wealthy individuals, and we did that. We asked them to pay the top rate they did under Bill Clinton, when the economy, by the way, was booming and we ran a surplus. They all said, this is going to be a disaster, and we're going to go into a recession. And we didn't.

But today, even as the top 1 percent is doing better than ever for all the reasons I talked about earlier, the Republican nominee for President's tax plan would give the top one-tenth of 1 percent—not the top 1 percent, the top one-tenth of 1 percent—a bigger tax cut than the 120 million American households at the bottom. It would explode our deficits by nearly $10 trillion. I'm not making this up. [*Laughter*] You can look at the math. That will not bring jobs back. That is not fighting for the American middle class. That will not help us win. That is not going to make your lives better. That will help people like him. That's the truth.

So you have a choice to make, Elkhart. You do: between more or less inequality, between stacking the deck for the folks who are already doing great or making sure everybody has a chance to succeed. That's the economic choice you face. That's what's at stake in this election: two very different visions for our economy. I hope I've broken it down for you.

Audience members. You have!

The President. Now, let me say this: I understand that not everybody votes based on their economic interests. Not everybody votes just based on the economy. We're more than just a matter of dollars and cents. Some folks care deeply about our Second Amendment rights. Some folks care about marriage equality. Some folks care about abortion. Some folks are going to vote based on national security or their worries about terrorism. They may think that we haven't done the right thing on any of those issues and that the Republicans have a better answer. We can have that debate. That's fine. Those are all issues very worthy of debate.

But if what you care about in this election is your pocketbook—[*laughter*]—if what you're concerned about is who will look out for the interests of working people and grow the middle class, if that's what you're concerned about——

Audience member. Michelle for President! [*Laughter*]

The President. ——then the debate—then, if that's what you're concerned about—the economy—the debate is not even close. One path would lead to lower wages. It would eliminate worker protections. It would cut investments in things like education. It would weaken the safety net. It would kick people off health insurance. It would let China write the rules for the global economy. It would let Big Oil weaken rules that protect our air and water. It would let big banks weaken rules that protect families from getting cheated. It would cut taxes for the wealthiest Americans to historic lows. Those are the facts.

And I know it sounds like a strange agenda for politicians who are claiming to care about you and working families. But those are their plans. You can find it on their websites. And when I hear working families thinking about voting for those plans, then I want to have an intervention. [*Laughter*] I want you to just take a look at what you're talking about here.

And if you tell me, you know what, Mr. President, you may be right, but I just disapprove of what Democrats stand for on gay rights or on going after ISIL, then I'm fine. Okay, I hear you. The economy is not everything. If you tell me, you know what, you may be right, but I just believe as a matter of principle that government should be small and the wealthy, they work harder than everybody else and so they should be able to keep what they've got—all right, well, that's—you're making a philosophical argument. I've got you.

But don't think that actually—that this agenda is going to help you. It's not designed to

help you. And the evidence of the last 30 years, not to mention common sense, should tell you that their answers to our challenges are no answers at all.

Fortunately, there's another path that leads to more jobs and higher wages and better benefits and a stronger safety net and a fairer Tax Code and a bigger voice for workers and trade on our terms. And it will make a real difference for the prospects of working families and will grow the middle class.

So that's the choice you face, Elkhart. The ideas I've laid out today, I want to be clear: They're not going to solve every problem. They're not going to make everybody financially secure overnight. We're still going to be facing global competition. Trying to make sure that all our kids are prepared for the 21st-century workforce, that's a 20-year project, that's not a 2-year project. We're still going to have to make sure that we're paying for Social Security and Medicaid and Medicare as our populations get older. There are still going to be a bunch of issues out there.

But the agenda I'm putting forward will point us in the right direction. And the one thing I can promise you is if we turn against each other based on divisions of race or religion, if we fall for a bunch of okey-doke—[*laughter*]—just because it sounds funny or the tweets are provocative—[*laughter*]—then we're not going to build on the progress that we've started. If we get cynical and just vote our fears, or if we don't vote at all, we won't build on the progress that we've started.

We've got to come together around our common values: our faith in hard work, our faith in responsibility, our belief in opportunity for everybody. We've got to assume the best in each other, not the worst. We've got to remember that sometimes, we all fall on hard times, and it's part of our job as a community of Americans to help folks up when they fall. Because whatever our differences, we all love this country. We all care about our children's futures. That's what makes us great. That's what makes us progress and become better versions of ourselves: because we believe in each other.

That's what's going to get us through our toughest moments. That's how we know something better is around the bend. There's going to be some setbacks along the way, but we know that our journey is not finished, and we know that with steady, persistent, collective effort, we're going to deliver a brighter day for our children and our children's children. That's what you proved, Elkhart, over these last 7 years. That's what you've shown America. Let's keep on showing it.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:30 p.m. at Concord Community High School. In his remarks, he referred to South Bend, IN, resident Kelly Rizzo, who wrote the President a letter after his visit to Elkhart on February 9, 2009, expressing her concerns about the economy; Abigail K. Alwine and Shannon Purcell, class of 2016 valedictorians, Concord Community High School; Donald J. Trump, chairman and president, Trump Organization, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate; and Gov. Michael R. Pence of Indiana. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks at the PBS NewsHour's "Questions for President Obama" Town Hall Meeting in Elkhart
June 1, 2016

PBS NewsHour Coanchor and Managing Editor Gwen Ifill. Good evening. And welcome to Elkhart, Indiana, as we sit down with President Obama and the residents of this community to discuss their concerns, look back on his time in office, and assess the feverish campaign to succeed him.

This marks the President's fifth visit to the once, and again, "RV Capital of the World," a small city where the unemployment rate hit

19.6 percent his first year in office and now has dropped to about 4 percent. But this White House isn't getting any credit for that turnaround. Residents here voted for Ted Cruz in this year's primaries and Mitt Romney by 2 to 1 in 2012. Even when President Obama won Indiana in 2008, just as the economy was crashing, Elkhart went with John McCain. So what gives? We've asked some of the people who live here to join us on the stage of the beautiful Lerner Theater here downtown for an intimate conversation.

But first, the President of the United States, Barack Obama.

The President. All right. Thank you. Hi, guys. How are you?

Ms. Ifill. Hi, Mr. President.

The President. Good to see you.

Ms. Ifill. Thank you.

The President. Good. Thank you. Thank you, guys.

Ms. Ifill. Our residents have been waiting faithfully, patiently, and eagerly to see you today.

The President. Well, I'm eager to see them. [*Laughter*] And this is a beautiful theater——

Ms. Ifill. It is beautiful.

The President. ——which got converted. And congratulations on a wonderful venue.

Ms. Ifill. Some of them voted for you; some of them didn't. We will talk about that in a moment.

The President. Well, that's what we would expect.

National Economy/2016 Presidential Election

Ms. Ifill. I first want to ask by talking to you a little bit about this campaign. What do you think it means when you hear the words "Let's make America great again"?

The President. I think America is pretty great. And it's interesting, I do a lot of commencement speeches this time of year. In fact, tomorrow I'm going to be going to the Air Force Academy to deliver a commencement for the second time there. And I always remind young people that despite all the challenges that we face right now, if you had the choice to be born in any one period of time in our history, and you didn't know ahead of time whether you were going to be rich or poor, Black or White, male or female, you just had to guess on what moment do you have a best chance of succeeding, it would actually be now; that America is the strongest country on Earth, its economy is the most durable on Earth. We are a country that has incredible diversity. People are striving, working hard, creating businesses. We've got the best universities in the world, the best scientists.

So we've got some challenges, and we've just come through a very rough stretch as a consequence of the financial crisis. But overall, not only are we recovered from the crisis that we had, but we're well positioned to do extraordinarily well going forward as long as we make some good decisions.

Ms. Ifill. And yet many people, including probably some folks in this room, think the deficits have gone up and the jobless rate has gone up and, in fact, that their lives have not improved. How—in fact, we have the nominee for—the presumptive nominee for the Republican Party saying—Donald Trump saying this: America is a third-world nation. How do you persuade, or, I suppose, how does your likely Democratic successor—possible—persuade anybody that's not true?

The President. Well, it's important you said my successor, because Michelle would be very upset if she thought I was running again. [*Laughter*]

The—look, you just look at the evidence here in Elkhart. As you mentioned in the introduction, when I took office, this was the first city I came to, and unemployment about a month after I took office—month and a half after I took office—was almost 20 percent. One out of 10 people were behind on their mortgage or in foreclosure. Today, the unemployment rate is around 4 percent. It's only about 1 in 30 people who are behind on their mortgage. The RV industry, which is central to Elkhart, is on track to break records in terms of sales.

And so that doesn't mean that folks aren't struggling in some circumstances. And one of the things that I've emphasized is that there are some long-term trends in the economy that

we have to tackle in terms of wages not going up as fast as they used to, some big costs—like college costs or health care costs—that are still a challenge, people still worrying about retirement. And so we're going to have to make sure that we make some good decisions going forward. But the notion that somehow America is in decline is just not borne out by the facts.

Ms. Ifill. But it resonates. It resonates among a lot of aggrieved people who are voting in big numbers for Donald Trump.

The President. Well, look, I think that what has always been true in American politics is that when we've gone through a tough time—and we went through the worst financial crisis of our lifetimes; I'm looking around, and I think it's safe to say that it's been the worst in the lifetimes or memories of most people here—then you feel nervous. People lost homes. People lost savings. People were worried about whether or not they could make ends meet. And so we're—even though we've recovered, people feel like the ground under their feet isn't quite as solid.

And in those circumstances, a lot of times, it's easy for somebody to come up and say, you know what, if we deport all the immigrants and build a wall, or if we cut off trade with China, or if we do X or Y or Z, that there's some simple answer, and suddenly, everything is going to feel secure. And——

Ms. Ifill. Why don't you mention Donald Trump by name?

The President. You know, he seems to do a good job mentioning his own name. [*Laughter*] So I figure, I'll let him do his advertising for him.

Ms. Ifill. Do you consider at all that any of the support for him is backlash against you personally?

The President. Well, here's one thing I would say, and I just spoke about this at the local high school: I think Trump is a more colorful character than some of the other Republican elected officials, but a lot of the story that he's telling is entirely consistent with what folks have been saying about me or the general story they've been telling about the economy for the last 7½, the last 10, the 20, the last 30 years.

And you can actually describe the story fairly concisely, right? The basic story they tell is that the problems that the middle class working families are experiencing has to do with a big, bloated Government that taxes the heck out of people and then gives that money to undeserving folks—welfare cheats or the 47 percent who are takers or whatever phrase they use—that businesses are being strangled by overregulation, that Obamacare has killed jobs.

And the fact of the matter is, when you look at it, the Government as a proportion of our overall economy is actually smaller now under my Presidency than it was under Ronald Reagan.

Ms. Ifill. Let me read you something that Bill Clinton said though.

The President. I have—but let me finish, Gwen.

Ms. Ifill. Okay.

The President. The—we have fewer Federal employees today. The health care costs since I signed Obamacare have actually gone up slower than they were before I signed it. Twenty million more people have health insurance. So the arguments they're making just are not borne out by the facts.

But what is true is that if people are feeling secure—feeling insecure and they're offered a simple reason for how they can feel more secure, people are going to be tempted by it, particularly if they're hearing that same story over and over again.

National Economy

Ms. Ifill. Perception. So Bill Clinton said, "Millions and millions and millions of people look at that pretty picture of America he painted," which you just described, "and they cannot find themselves in it to save their lives."

The President. The pretty picture that——

Ms. Ifill. The pretty picture of the—all the things that have gone well. Why is there a disconnect between—that he's describing here?

The President. Well, look, here's what has changed in the economy over the last 20 to 30 years. Right after World War II, America was

ascendant. It was dominant around the world because Europe was blown up, Japan was digging itself out of the rubble, China was still a backwater, the—Eastern Europe was behind the Iron Curtain. There wasn't much competition. We were the only folks who were seriously making cars and trucks and appliances and you name it. We had strong unionization, which meant that workers had leverage so that they could get a good share of the—a growing pie. And people saw, each year and each generation, their standards of living going up pretty rapidly.

And what started happening is, you started seeing foreign competition. Unions started getting busted, so workers had less leverage, which meant their wages didn't go up quite as fast. You started seeing the end of defined benefit pension plans. In terms of health care programs, if you had health care on your job, suddenly, you were paying a lot of deductibles and premiums. College costs started going up because the public university system, which used to be generously funded by State governments so that tuition was low, suddenly, State governments were spending more money on prisons than they were on universities, which meant tuition went up.

You add all those things together, and people then start feeling more stressed. Now, the answer to that is how do we get wages up? How do we make sure that you can save for retirement? How can you make sure that your kid can afford to get a higher education to compete for the jobs of the future? And the question then is, what is actually going to get that done?

To me, if we raise the minimum wage; if we make it easier, not harder, for people to unionize; if we negotiate trade deals that raise labor standards and environmental standards in other countries, instead of letting them sell here and we can't sell there; if we make sure that we're rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our infrastructure to put a bunch of folks in hardhats back to work; if we make Social Security stronger rather than cutting it—if we do those things, then we are going to see wages go up, labor markets tighten, and we will relieve a lot of the stress that people feel.

But if you look at the arguments that are being made by the Republicans and the actions that have been taken by those Members of Congress, it's hard to see how cutting taxes for the wealthiest Americans, deregulating Wall Street again, is somehow going to benefit middle class families.

Ms. Ifill. Well, let's turn to the audience and see what they think. We're going to open this conversation up. I have a lot more questions, but they do too. And we're going to be right back in just a moment with that.

[*At this point, the town hall was interrupted for a station break and then continued as follows.*]

Ms. Ifill. So, Mr. President, we are back with a few questions for you from our invited audience here. They are anxious to get started, and so am I.

You're a small-businessman here in Elkhart.

Q. Yes, I am.

Ms. Ifill. What's your name?

Q. Bill Kercher.

Ms. Ifill. What's your question for the President?

Family Farms/Health Care Reform/Government Regulations

Q. Mr. President, I am a fifth-generation fruit and vegetable grower here in Elkhart County. And over the last 6 years, we've seen a dramatic increase in the number of regulations that touch all aspects of our business, from the Food Safety Modernization Act to Obamacare and many others. Now, large farms are able to comply with these regulations more easily, and small family farms we've seen actually exiting the industry. At what point are we overregulated, if not now? And how can we encourage younger growers to either stay or enter an industry when the barriers to entry are higher than ever? Thank you.

The President. Well, it's a great question. And first of all, my administration's policy has been to encourage family farming rather than

big agribusiness, because not only is that sort of a model of farming that built this country, but as Michelle will tell you, it actually produces food that's better for you, as she reminds me constantly. [*Laughter*] So we want you to succeed.

Now, if you look at the trend lines in terms of small family farms, the problem generally has been actually family farms getting bought up by larger agricultural operations. It's been you guys not always getting good prices for the products that you put together.

I don't doubt that some elements of the regulations I've put in place have probably put a burden on you. So let's take health care, for example. It may be that previously you weren't able—you didn't think you were able to provide health insurance for your employees. The problem is, is if they're not getting health insurance through you, then that means that they're relying on the emergency room and they're relying on taxpayers, like everybody else, to cover those costs if they get in an accident or if they get sick.

And so it has always been our view that if we can put something together where people can buy health insurance through a pool—it's subsidized if they're not making enough money to pay for their own health insurance—that that overall is going to be a more efficient way to do it. And in fact, health care inflation, the rate at which health care costs have gone up for small businesses as well as large businesses, has been significantly slower since I passed the law than it was beforehand.

Now, what I would say is that there are a bunch of regulations that have been put in place in the past that may have been well intentioned, but didn't work. Sometimes, they're outdated. And so what I've told my administration to do is to go back and look at all the regulations that are there. If there's not a good reason for them, or if they're outdated, or if we can redesign them to put less of a burden on businesses, we should do so. I'm not interested in regulating just for the sake of regulating. But there are some things—like making sure we've got clean air and clean water, making sure that folks have health insurance, making sure that worker safety is a priority—that I do think is part of our overall obligation as a—as not a third-world country, but as an advanced nation, to make sure that we're doing the right thing.

And I would hope that as a consequence of the overall economy doing better, you've also been doing better as well. And anybody who is running a business would rather not have any regulations, just as a general rule, and certainly, you don't want a situation where you feel like you're being regulated and your competitor is not. But what we've tried to do is to be very fair in terms of looking at what regulations make a difference. If you're a really small business of, like, 25 people or less, typically, you are exempted from those regulations—a lot of the Federal regulations. If you get to a certain size, then it's part of the cost of doing business. But what it also does is, it makes sure that we as a society are looking out for workers, we're protecting our families, and people are getting decent wages, and they've got health care so they're not going to the emergency room when they get sick.

Ms. Ifill. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Mr. Kercher.

As you may have been—may have noticed, following this election, Donald Trump came to Indiana and talked a lot about what happened with the Carrier Corporation and shipping their jobs out of State. Here is someone who worked for Carrier, and he has a question for you.

Q. How are you doing, Mr. President?

The President. How are you?

Manufacturing/Outsourcing/Job Training

Q. My name is Eric Cottingham. And I'm representing the Steelworkers Union, Local 1999. And I'm trying to find out what do we have left as far as all of our jobs are leaving Indianapolis. Right? And I see here, you're doing a lot of things, but in Indianapolis, there's nothing there for us. I mean, what's next? I mean, what can we look forward to in the future as far as jobs, employment, whatever? Because all of our jobs has left or in the process of leaving, sir.

The President. Well, in fact, we've seen more manufacturing jobs created since I've been President than any time since the 1990s. That's a fact. And if you look at just the auto industry as an example, they've had record sales, and they've hired back more people over the last 5 years than they had for a very long, long time. We actually make more stuff, have a bigger manufacturing base today than we've had in most of our history. The problems have been—part of the problems have had to do with jobs going overseas. And this is one of the reasons why I've been trying to negotiate trade deals to raise wages and environmental standards in other countries so that they're not undercutting us.

But frankly, part of it has had to do with automation. You go into an auto factory today and—that used to have 10,000, and now they've got a thousand people making the same number of cars or more. And so what that means is, even though we're making the same amount of stuff in our manufacturing sector, we're employing fewer people.

Now, the good news is that there are entire new industries that are starting to pop up and you're actually seeing some manufacturers coming back to the United States because they're starting to realize, you know what, energy prices are lower here, workers are better here, this is our biggest market, and so even though we offshored and went someplace else before, now it turns out, we're better off going ahead and manufacturing here.

But for those folks who've lost their job right now because a plant went down to Mexico, that isn't going to make you feel better. And so what we have to do is to make sure that folks are trained for the jobs that are coming in now, because some of those jobs of the past are just not going to come back. And when somebody says—like the person you just mentioned who I'm not going to advertise for—that he's going to bring all these jobs back, well, how exactly are you going to do that? What are you going to do? There's no answer to it. He just says, well, I'm going to negotiate a better deal. Well, what—how exactly are you going to negotiate that? What magic wand do you have? And usually, the answer is he doesn't have an answer.

So what I've tried to do, what my administration has tried to do is let's grow those manufacturing sectors—like clean energy, like some of these new technologies that are coming up—let's focus on those. We've set up, for example, manufacturing hubs where we work with universities, local businesses, local governments to create research labs that can take something like 3–D printing or nanotechnology or all kinds of stuff that I can't really explain, because the scientists and really smart people know all about it—[*laughter*]—and said, let's invest in this so that when the new jobs come, they're coming here.

But I've got to tell you that the days when you just being able to—you just being willing to work hard and you can now walk into a plant and suddenly there's going to be a job for you for 30 years or 40 years, that's just not going to be there for our kids, because, more and more, that stuff is going to be automated. And if you go into a factory, that kid is going to need to know computers or is going to need to know some science and some math, because they're not even going to be picking anything up, they're just going to be working on a keyboard.

And that's why we've put so much emphasis on job training, community colleges. That's why I've proposed making the first 2 years of community college free so that we know that every young person, they're going to be able to—if they're not going for a full 4-year degree, at least they're going to be getting the technical training they need for those jobs of the future.

But you cannot look backwards. And that doesn't make folks feel good sometimes, especially if it's a town that was reliant on a couple of big manufacturers. But they're going to have to retrain for the jobs of the future, not the jobs of the past.

Ms. Ifill. Well, you mentioned education, you touched on education. We have a question here about that. What's your name?

Q. Vanessa Corredera. Hi, Mr. President.

The President. How are you, Vanessa?

Higher Education/College Costs/Student Loans

Q. Fine, thank you.

The President. Good.

Q. You've addressed the crushing student debt, especially for higher education, and you've cited initiatives with community colleges, the STEM disciplines, and technology as potential responses. Many of my friends and especially my students are still struggling with this issue. So my question for you is, how do you continue to address this issue your final months in office? And how can you do so in a way that perhaps includes the humanities and liberal arts education as a whole when, frankly, those are often very much under attack?

The President. What do you teach?

Q. I teach English at Andrews University over in Michigan.

The President. I thought you were a student. [*Laughter*]

Q. Thank you.

The President. I'm getting old, I'm telling you. [*Laughter*] All the teachers look like students now. [*Laughter*]

The—well, first of all, let me just say that I am—I have been emphasizing STEM education—that's science, technology, engineering, and math—not because I think the humanities are unimportant, but because we generally are—have not been producing as many engineers and as many scientists as—and people with those kinds of technological skills as compared to China, for example. And we send a lot of people into banking and folks like me, who become lawyers, but the truth of the matter is, is that we have to make sure that we continue to have a strong base in the sciences and engineering if we're going to remain the most innovative economy in the world. But as somebody who studied humanities himself, I think it's extremely important as well.

The broader issue of financing education, as I mentioned, the reason that college is so much more expensive for this generation as it was for my generation, and even better for the previous generation, really had to do with government spending. It used to be that most State universities were heavily subsidized by the State so they kept tuition really, really low.

What happened around the eighties, nineties was, State legislators started saying, we've got to build more prisons. In fairness to them, they also started feeling more pressure because of Medicaid spending, because health care costs were going up. And so they started cutting higher education budgets, and they made up for it with higher tuition. And that's why, at least at public colleges and universities, the costs have gone up a lot.

Now, here's what we've done. The first thing I did when I came into office was, we reformed the student loan program. Because what was happening was on federally subsidized student loans, it was all run through the banks, and the banks were getting billions of dollars of profits for managing these loans to students, even though the loans were guaranteed by the Federal Government so they weren't taking any risk. And we said let's cut the middle man out, let's loan directly to students. So that saved us tens of billions of dollars; that allowed us to expand the Pell grant program and to lower or cap interest on student loans.

But just because we give more loans or more grants, that doesn't always help with the rising cost. And that's why I've proposed this 2-year free college—community college, because what that does is that allows a young person, who is strapped for cash and whose parents are doing everything they can, but can only do so much, to say, I'll get my first 2 years for free; I'll transfer those credits to a 4-year public college or university, and I've now just potentially cut the amount of loans that I've got in half.

And for some people who decide they don't need a 4-year college education—they want to be a graphic designer, they want to go into a trade—now they can get the training they need without incurring any debt. So these are all proposals that are—we know work. There are some States and cities that are already doing this to—free community college proposal, and it's working, and it's really helping to reduce costs.

And the last thing, we're also trying to work with the universities just to figure out ways that they can reduce costs using, for example, online learning, making—putting out reports so that parents and students are better consumers so that they know, well, let me not sign up for that 4-year college where the graduation rates are low, and it's got great dorms and great gyms and nice food, but I'm going to be $50,000 worth of debt, and I may not get a job.

Ms. Ifill. Thank you, Mr. President.

Sir, your name?

Q. Arvis Dawson.

Ms. Ifill. And your question?

Q. First of all, I want to thank you, President, for your service to our country.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Q. And despite the polls, there's a lot of love for you here in Elkhart. [*Laughter*]

The President. Oh, I appreciate that. You know, I actually—[*applause*]—one thing is, after 7½ years, you don't worry about the polls no more. [*Laughter*] You really don't.

Transgender Rights

Q. My question to you, Mr. President: I'm a strong believer in equal rights for everyone, a very strong believer in that. I was wondering, though, with all the pressing issues that you have before you right now, why is the issue of which bathroom a person uses such an issue?

The President. Well, I—you know what, it's a great question. Somehow, people think I made it an issue. I didn't make it an issue. There are a lot of things that are more pressing, you're absolutely right. What happened, and what continues to happen, is you have transgender kids in schools, and they get bullied, and they get ostracized, and it's tough for them. And we're of a generation where that stuff was all out of sight and out of mind, and so people suffered silently. But now they're out in the open.

And the question then is, schools are asking us, the Department of Education, for guidance, how should we deal with this? And my answer is that we should deal with this issue the same way we'd want it dealt with if it was our child. And that is to try to create an environment of some dignity and kindness for these kids. And that's sort of the bottom line. I have to just say what's in my heart, but I also have to look at what's the law. And my best interpretation of what our laws and our obligations are is that we should try to accommodate these kids so that they are not in a vulnerable situation.

Now, I understand that people, for religious beliefs or just general discomfort, might disagree. And I'm not the one who's making a big issue of it, but if the school districts around the country ask me, what do you think we should do, then what we're going to do is tell them, let's find a way to accommodate them in a way that makes sure that these kids are not excluded and ostracized.

Ms. Ifill. Let me ask Mr. Dawson whether he's satisfied with the answer to that question, and what is it about this that bothers you?

Q. Mainly, it's my religious belief. Yes, I'm satisfied with the answer to the question. Coming from the church background that I come from, I believe in equal rights for all.

The President. I know.

Q. But I think, too, wherever you were going to the bathroom before, continue to go to the bathroom there. I don't have a problem with that.

The President. Well, but—right, and the problem is, is just for a lot of these kids, they might not even feel comfortable going to the bathroom, which is a tough situation if you're a kid. And look, I have profound respect for everybody's religious beliefs on this, but if you're at a public school, the question is, how do we just make sure that children are treated with kindness? That's all. And my reading of Scripture tells me that that Golden Rule is pretty high up there in terms of my Christian belief. That doesn't mean somebody else has to interpret it the same way; it does mean, as President of the United States, those are the values that I think are important.

Now, this is going to be settled by the courts, ultimately. There have been lawsuits everywhere. I just want to emphasize to you, though, this—it's not like I woke up one day and I said, man, you know what we really need

to do is let's start working on high school bathrooms. [*Laughter*] That—I was thinking about ISIL—[*laughter*]—and I was thinking about the economy, and I'm thinking about jobs. But one of the things that, as President, you learn is that you don't choose the issues all the time, issues come to you. And then, you have to make your best judgment about what you think is right. And I've expressed what I think is the best judgment that is consistent with our traditions and our laws.

Ms. Ifill. Have another issue to come to you here, Mr. President. What's your name?

Q. Nancy Wirt.

Ms. Ifill. And what do you have—your question for the President?

2016 Presidential Election/Civility in Politics/Gerrymandering

Q. Mr. President, I, like many Americans, politically, I'm in the center; I'm not too right, I'm not too left.

The President. Right.

Q. So I spent a lot of time watching the debates, both parties, trying to get a sense of who is my candidate. So I watched a lot this year, and what I came back with at the end was, I found that there was a lot of lack of civility; that people were speaking—candidates were speaking over one another, shouting, calling each other names. There was a lot of inappropriate comments. I was pretty saddened by the whole situation. I'm curious what your thoughts are on the tone of the debates overall.

Ms. Ifill. Were you watching the debates, Mr. President?

The President. You know, I confess, I didn't. [*Laughter*] But I'm really glad you did. I don't watch them because I'm just steeped in this stuff, so I could probably make all the arguments for all the candidates, including the Republican side, just because I've heard them a lot in my day-to-day work. But I think it's really important that you took the time to do what every citizen should do, which is try to get informed.

This whole issue of civility is—you're right to be distressed by it. Now, I think it's important not to romanticize what politics used to be like. If you read accounts of what, like, Tom Jefferson said about John Adams or what folks said about Lincoln—I mean, they called them monkeys; they said they were illegitimate children. They said, you know—I mean, this was some rough stuff. [*Laughter*] It wasn't on TV, because they didn't have TVs, but it was rough.

But I do think what has happened is that some of the boundaries that used to be there for how you debated ideas have broken down. And no offense against Gwen, because she works for PBS, which is all about civility——

Ms. Ifill. Absolutely. [*Laughter*]

The President. ——but I do think that the TV culture, the reality culture contributes to this. Because what happens at—talk radio culture—what happens is that politicians get the most attention the more outrageous they sound. And so if you're civil and quiet and polite, nobody covers you. But if you say something crazy or rude, you're all over the news. And that has fed, I think, this kind of arms race of insults and controversy that doesn't shine a lot of light, even though it generates a lot of heat.

The other thing that contributes to this is, we—and a lot of times, we blame politicians, but part of it is what's happened in terms of our voting patterns. And there are a couple of reasons for this. One is political gerrymandering, which is that the way district lines are drawn are—now they use computers. They're so precise that whoever is in power, whether it's Democrats in a State or Republicans in a State—and both parties do this—they will draw these lines so precise so that every district, they know this is going to be a Republican district, this is going to be a Democratic district. And so out of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives, maybe 10 percent of them are actually competitive, and the rest of them, no matter what happens, are going to be either Republican or Democrat.

Well, what happens when that exists? It means, you don't—if you're a Republican, you don't have to worry about what the Democrat is saying, you don't have to go to the center. You just have to make sure that the Tea Party Republican to your right doesn't say something

more outlandish than you do. Same thing on the left. The Democrat is only worried about what the person on the farthest left is going to say. And that drives people into opposite directions.

So the one thing I would say is, first of all, don't get discouraged. Get out there and vote. But what I would say is that every voter here, Democrat or Republican, if you want more civility, than you vote for folks who are civil and who are making arguments and using logic and presenting evidence and not just somebody who is popping off. And that's true whether it's on the left or the right.

And if you are voting for somebody who is just being controversial for the sake of it or helping you vent, then you only have yourself to blame if it turns out that the political debate starts getting more and more crass.

2016 Presidential Election

Ms. Ifill. Since we're talking politics, Mr. President, I do want to ask you this. The primary season is almost over. Well, you've talked a lot about what Republicans are and are not doing in this campaign. And I wonder when we can expect you to get involved in the Democratic race. Are we going to see an endorsement soon? Bernie Sanders, perhaps? [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, I think that there's been a healthy debate in the Democratic Party. And it's almost over. We've got—on Tuesday, you'll have some big States, California and New Jersey, where the votes will take place. What I've tried to do is to make sure that voters, rather than me big-footing the situation, are deciding the outcome.

I think we'll probably have a pretty good sense next week of who the nominee will end up being. I think both Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton are good people. I think that they broadly share the goals that I have. There are some tactical differences within the Democratic Party about how do you get stuff done. But there's going to be plenty of time for me to step in and campaign.

Ms. Ifill. I notice you don't mind using their names.

The President. Well, they—as I said, they're not as good at marketing. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Ifill. I have another question for you here.

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Q. Mr. Obama, in regards to Obamacare, I've been receiving my health insurance through the marketplace.

The President. Yes.

Q. And the first year, the subsidy was very high, and my premium was very low, and I was very happy. Now, beginning in January of '16, the subsidy was lower, and my premium went up dramatically, and my income was nearly the same. In fact, in—for this year, I'm paying 22 percent of my income for health care. So that's my concern and my complaint.

The second part of my question is, what's going to happen to Obamacare in 2017 and beyond?

The President. Yes. Well, I don't know your particular circumstance. Your subsidy should not have gone down if your income is more or less the same, unless there was some significant difference in your tax status. So I'd—I'll try to find out about that.

What is true is that some of the premiums went up because essentially, in the first year of a startup program, a lot of insurance companies didn't quite know how to price things, and so they priced substantially lower than people expected. And now things are kind of evening out, which means that some folks who overpriced, they've dropped their prices; some have gone up. But on average, what we're seeing is that the average increase is about 4 bucks per month for somebody who is signed up.

Some markets are different. One of the big problems that we've had is making sure that there's enough competition, enough insurers who are bidding for your business in rural communities, because some areas just don't have as many providers and as many insurance companies, and so you only get one or two, and they start thinking, well, maybe we can jack up prices a little bit higher. Now, technically, your State insurance commissioner is able to—has to

approve any hikes, and those that are not justified economically, those should be stopped.

But what I would say generally is that—and we're monitoring this very carefully, I promise, since, obviously, everybody has been predicting disaster and apocalypse on this thing for a long time—is, generally speaking, premiums have been lower than people expected originally. In some markets, they've gone up faster; some markets slower. They're still cheaper than you would be able to get outside of the marketplace. But there are some things that we've got to do to lower health care costs generally, particularly drug prices.

And part of Obamacare that's not talked about a lot is us trying to improve the health care delivery system so we—there's not as much waste: so that you're not taking multiple tests, so that you're not readmitted into a hospital because they didn't take care of business the first time. And that's part of the reason why, overall, health care inflation has actually gone down—has gone up at about half the rate that it did before the law passed.

For the average person here, your premiums are about $2,600 lower than they would have been if health care inflation had kept on going up at the same pace as it did before Obamacare was passed. Now, the fact that they're still going up makes you feel bad. You'd feel worse if they'd gone up faster. So this is still an issue of challenge to policymakers and to families. I'm happy, after this town hall, to get some details about your situation, because if your income didn't go up much, at least the subsidies should not change that much.

Ms. Ifill. Another question for you over here, Mr. President. Your name?

Syrian Refugees/Homelessness Among Veterans

Q. My name is Gerald Sparks. I'm a member of Local 1118, Painters and Allied Trades Union.

The President. Good to see you.

Q. And I've got a two-part question for you. First, with over 79,000 Syrian refugees already coming into the States, and tens of thousands more coming in, how can you guarantee that there's none that have been radicalized? And, two, don't you feel that that money would be better spent taking care of the tens of thousands of homeless veterans we have sleeping on the streets every night, some with children, and the ones committing suicide daily? Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Yes. Well, first, let me say, sir, that we don't have tens of thousands of Syrian refugees coming in. I—we're trying to get—trying to admit several thousand. So far, I think, we've been able to admit about 2,500. In contrast, Canada has taken in 25,000, and we're a much bigger country. Germany has taken in half a million. There's a tragedy going on there, and people are homeless and dying. And we're the biggest, wealthiest country on Earth, and we have some obligation to help, just like we'd expect people to help if Americans were in trouble.

And so I think it's really important to understand, we're not spending a lot of money on bringing in and housing refugees. And this is what I mean about making sure that when we're deciding about elections and voting, that we look at the facts. I'm trying to get more refugees admitted. It's not close to the kinds of numbers you were talking about. We just can't. But—and the reason is, is because refugees are actually admitted on a much stricter standard than the average tourist who's coming in on a visa. They have to go through a full background check—FBI, our intelligence agencies check through every single person who comes in. It's, like, a month-long process.

But if you are somebody from France, you don't even need a visa; you just hop on the plane and you're here in the United States. And if you're a member of ISIL that happens to be a citizen of France or Germany, you come on in. Much more risk is involved in terms of just ordinary tourists or, for that matter, American citizens who have gotten brainwashed by ISIL on the computer, like they did in San Bernardino, and suddenly, they just go to the local gun store, where, by the way, because the Republicans have blocked it, we can't even put them on a list to prevent them from buying weapons. That's a much bigger danger than the Syrian refugees.

Now, the second point you made about veterans' homelessness, one of the things that I did when I came into office is I said, if somebody has put on the uniform of this country and fought for our freedom, they cannot be homeless, and our goal should be zero homelessness, zero tolerance for homelessness. And we have cut veterans homelessness since I've been in office by about a third. Tens of thousands of veterans who used to be homeless are now housed.

But one is too many. So we've got some cities where they've set a goal of zero homeless veterans and they've actually achieved it. We're going to keep on working as long as we have to, to get this done. And we have budgeted the dollars to make sure that every veteran is put in place.

But I just want to say that the reason that we've got veterans' homelessness is not because of Syrian refugees. It's not because of undeserving folks on welfare. It's because we've had a Congress that for too long talks tough about patriotism and looking out for our troops, and orders folks—are fine with us sending 180,000 people into war, but then, when it came down to the actual veterans' budget, it wasn't there. And I increased the veterans' budget more—the VA budget more than any President in history, increased it 11 percent my first year. But we've still got work to do on it.

Ms. Ifill. Mr. President, I'm going to try to squeeze in another question——

The President. Thank you for the question though. Are you a veteran yourself?

Q. No, but I support our troops.

The President. All right. I appreciate your service.

Ms. Ifill. Yes, hi. What's your name?

Q. Marianne Neufeldt.

Ms. Ifill. Okay. What's your question for the President?

Presidency/2008–2009 Recession/Libya

Q. Mr. President, what is the one thing you would go back and change during your Presidency, and how would you change it?

The President. Other than dyeing my hair? [*Laughter*] I have to tell you, every day, I make some mistake. Fortunately, most of them aren't that big. Sometimes, you just make—you use your best judgment because you're working with probabilities. You don't know the perfect answer. If something is easy, it does not reach my desk. [*Laughter*] By definition, somebody else has solved it. If something is easy to solve, I don't even see it. Somebody else has solved it a long time ago.

So most of the time, I'm dealing with probabilities. If I'm making a decision about are we going to take a strike against bin Laden, I don't even know if bin Laden is there, and I've got young men and women—young men who are at risk when I send them there—I'm operating on probabilities. When we decided to bail out the auto industry—you were talking about polls earlier—that polled at about 10 percent, even in Michigan. Because people were so mad about the bank bailouts, they thought, no more bailouts. And we weren't positive the thing was going to work, but we knew that if we didn't do it, you'd lose a million jobs all across the Midwest, including here in Indiana. So we made that bet, and it worked.

If I were to talk about domestic policy, I think the thing I would have probably done differently is, I would have tried to describe earlier to the American people how serious the recession was going to be, which is—which would have, hopefully, allowed us to have an even bigger response than we did. Our—the Recovery Act, our response to the recession, was actually bigger than the New Deal. It—that's how a lot of teachers kept their jobs. That's how a lot of construction workers stayed on the job and projects kept on going. That's how a lot of States met their budget. That's why we didn't end up having 30-percent unemployment.

But I—in the balance of trying to reassure people, I maybe didn't indicate to them that, look, this is probably going to be a 2-, 3-, 4-year process of us digging out of this hole so that we could have staged some of that recovery money over a longer period of time and possibly accelerated the recovery.

In terms of foreign policy—I've said this before—we decided to go in as part of a broader coalition to—into Libya to make sure that this guy Qadhafi, who had been a State sponsor of terrorism, didn't go in and start slaughtering his own people. We succeeded and probably saved tens of thousands of lives. But I did a little too much counting on other countries to then stabilize and help support government formation, and now it's kind of a mess.

I could give you a long list. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Ifill. But now, Mr.——

The President. But I tell you, I mean, the one thing I can say is, every day, when I wake up, I'm focused on how can I make your lives better, how can I protect the American people, how can I increase their prosperity. At the end of the day, I can always say honestly that I did my best. And hopefully, what I'm also usually trying to do is to admit that if something is not working as well as it should be, let's see if we can improve it. That's where we need a Congress that is not about yelling and is more about solving problems.

Ms. Ifill. Mr. President, we will prevail on you to come back and give us the rest of that list at another time, because we're out of time for now.

The President. Okay.

Ms. Ifill. Thank you very much for joining us. Thank you very much, the good people of Elkhart, Indiana, for joining us. We really appreciate it. We hope you will keep tuning into the PBS NewsHour and at our website at pbs.org/newshour for more on all of the issues and more raised tonight.

From all of us here in the Hoosier State today, thank you to the President and to the people of Elkhart. Goodnight.

[*Following the broadcast portion of the town hall, the President continued to take questions from audience members as follows.*]

U.S. Servicemembers

Q. [*Inaudible*]—our first responders and all their families for everything that they do and have done to try and keep us safe.

The President. I appreciate that. I appreciate that. I will tell you, one of the great honors of this job is serving as Commander in Chief, because the quality of people in our military today, the excellence of how they do their jobs, from the lowest private to the members of the Joint Chiefs, the fact that they're really serious about understanding the costs of war so that they don't go around making arguments just on the basis of ideology or politics, but it's all about getting the job done—I couldn't be more impressed.

Gun Control

Q. I think we're all aware that gun control and our Second Amendment rights are going to be a hot topic in the upcoming election this fall. And I think we're aware that Trump and Hillary—if she doesn't get charged by the FBI—are on opposite ends of the issue. Knowing that we apply common sense to other issues in our society, specifically, like holding irresponsible people accountable for their actions when they drink and drive and kill somebody or when they text on a cell phone and drive and kill somebody——

Ms. Ifill. So what's your question, sir?

Q. ——and we do that without restricting control of cars and cell phones to the rest of us, the good guys, why then do you and Hillary want to control and restrict and limit gun manufacturers, gun owners, and responsible use of guns and ammunition to the rest of us, the good guys, instead of holding the bad guys accountable for their actions?

And, Mr. President, if I may, I'd like to use Chicago, your hometown, a city that has some of the strictest gun laws in the Nation, a city that for decades—and still is under Democratic control—a city that has an outrageous and even embarrassing murder rate, as my first example. Why can't we round up these thugs, these drug dealers and gang members, and hold them accountable for their actions or allow the good people in Chicago access to firearms to protect themselves? Thank you.

The President. Good. All right. Well, let me—it's a multipart question, so let me just say a couple things. First of all, the notion that I or

Hillary or Democrats or whoever you want to choose are hell-bent on taking away folks' guns is just not true, and I don't care how many times the NRA says it. I'm about to leave office. There have been more guns sold since I've been President than just about any time in U.S. history. There are enough guns for every man, woman, and child in this country. And at no point have I ever—ever—proposed confiscating guns from responsible gun owners. So it's just not true.

What I have said is precisely what you suggested, which is, why don't we treat this like every other thing that we use? We used to have really bad auto fatality rates. The auto fatality rate has actually dropped precipitously, drastically, since I was a kid. Why is that? We decided we had seatbelt laws. We decided to have manufacturers put airbags on—in place. We decided to crack down on drunk driving and texting. We decided to redesign roads so that they were less likely to have a car bank. We studied what is causing this—these fatalities using science and data and evidence, and then we slowly treated it like the public health problem it was, and it got reduced.

We are not allowed to do any of that when it comes to guns because people—if you propose anything, it is suggested that we're trying to wipe away gun rights and impose tyranny and martial law. Do you know that Congress will not allow the Center for Disease Control to study gun violence? They're not allowed to study it because the notion is, is that by studying it, the same way we do with traffic accidents, somehow, that's going to lead to everybody's gun being confiscated.

When we talked about background checks—if you buy a car, if you want to get a license—first of all, you've got to get a license. You have to take a test. People have to know that you know how to drive. You don't have to do any of that with respect to buying a gun. And when we talked about doing effective background checks, it was resisted because the notion was, we were going to take your guns away.

I just came from a meeting today in the Situation Room in which I've got people who we know have been on ISIL websites, living here in the United States, U.S. citizens, and we're allowed to put them on the no-fly list when it comes to airlines, but because of the National Rifle Association, I cannot prohibit those people from buying a gun. This is somebody who is a known ISIL sympathizer. And if he wants to walk into a gun store or a gun show right now and buy as many weapons and ammo as he can, nothing is prohibiting him from doing that, even though the FBI knows who that person is.

So, sir, I just have to say respectfully that there is a way for us to have commonsense gun laws. There is a way for us to make sure that lawful, responsible gun owners like yourself are able to use it for sporting, hunting, protecting yourself. But the only way we're going to do that is if we don't have a situation in which anything that is proposed is viewed as some tyrannical destruction of the Second Amendment. And that's how the issue too often gets framed.

Ms. Ifill. Mr. President, you've been very generous with your time.

The President. I haven't.

Ms. Ifill. You really have.

The President. But I'm glad you asked that because I know I've—[*inaudible*].

Ms. Ifill. I'm glad you did.

The President. ——a lot of folks here.

Ms. Ifill. But you've got places to go.

The President. I've got to go to the Air Force Academy to deliver a commencement tomorrow. But for those of you who are further interested on this gun issue, I actually did a whole town hall with a competitor, CNN.

Ms. Ifill. Anderson Cooper.

The President. You can pull it up on YouTube, and I think it will give you more of a sense of the kinds of issues that I'm talking about.

Ms. Ifill. You know, you could stay here all night, or I could let you go.

The President. I could.

Ms. Ifill. Thank you very much.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Well, we know that it exists because I'm putting on bug spray all the time when I go out.

Medical Research

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. We've been doing some investment. This whole issue of medical research is something that's a top priority, and we've been trying to put more money into it. But when I get back, I'll ask about whether we're doing something on—what kinds of fruits and vegetables you've got? Did you bring some samples? [*Laughter*]

Q. I didn't. Sweet corn——

The President. Sweet corn. Where are you selling mostly?

Q. Retailers.

The President. Retailers. Fantastic. All right, well, congratulations. Next time I'm in town, maybe I'll pass.

Thank you, guys. All right, thank you. Thank you, sir. Appreciate you.

Q. Can I ask you a question?

The President. Real quick. Yes, go ahead. Thank you, sir.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights

Q. In light of recent legislation, there's been a lot of things passed that discriminate against LGBT——

The President. At the State levels.

Q. ——and restrict women's rights to contraception or abortion. And I wonder what encouragement you could give me and people like-minded who believe that people should—that I should be able to decide what I want to do with my body and not have this already in writing that I can do and have somebody restrict that, and the fact as a LGBT advocate not be allowed to have the same rights as other people?

The President. Well, here's what I would say. We still have work to do. But in terms of LGBT rights, the transformation of this country in my lifetime is extraordinary. The change in attitudes just since—and I'm not that old a guy. I know to you, I am. But this wasn't even talked about in high school when I was there. Very few people even felt comfortable being out. And now you have—I mean, the culture has changed completely on this.

So I guess what I'd say to you as a young person is, first of all, you should be pretty hopeful about the incredible progress that's been made on the issue you care about. With respect to a lot of restricted laws not just on LGBT issues, but also on reproductive health issues or contraception, a lot of those are being done at the State level. And people have different opinions on that on both sides. I would say that in our politics, we ignore State government more than we should. Everybody focuses on all the noise going on in Congress, but a lot of these issues are at the State level, and a lot of people don't even know who their State legislator is. They don't know what's going on in terms of laws that are passed in State houses.

And this is why I say, regardless of your political views—Democrat, Republican, conservative, liberal, Independent—you have to vote. I know it doesn't seem like it makes a big difference, but we have a lower voting rate than any other advanced nation. In the last midterm election, less than 40 percent of people voted who were eligible to vote. Less than 40 percent. And then, people are surprised when crazy stuff happens. [*Laughter*] Well, if great, thoughtful people who are trying to look at both sides of issues and trying to sort things out, and believe in civility, et cetera—if they're not bothering voting, then the people who vote are the people who are the most polarized, least likely to be able to come up with compromises that achieve our goals. So you've got to vote. There's no excuse.

Ms. Ifill. Thanks, everybody.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:10 p.m. at the Lerner Theater. In his remarks, he referred to Donald J. Trump, chairman and president, Trump Organization, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate; and Sen. Bernard Sanders and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in their capacity as Democratic Presidential candidates. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Ms. Ifill referred to Sen. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candi-

date; 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney; 2008 Republican Presidential nominee Sen. John S. McCain III; former President William J. Clinton; and Anderson Cooper, anchor, CNN's "Anderson Cooper 360°" program. Portions of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Digital Computer Exports
June 1, 2016

Dear Mr. Chairman: (Dear Senator:) (Dear Representative:)

In accordance with the provisions of section 1211(d) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1998 (Public Law 105–85), I hereby notify you of my decision to establish a new level for the notification procedure for digital computers set forth in section 1211(a) of Public Law 105–85. The new level will be 12.5 Weighted TeraFLOPS. The attached report provides the rationale supporting this decision and fulfills the requirements of Public Law 105–85, sections 1211(d) and (e).

I have made this change based on the recommendation of the Departments of State, Defense, Commerce, and Energy.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John S, McCain III, chairman, and John F. Reed, ranking member, Senate Committee on Armed Services; Richard C. Shelby, chairman, and Sherrod C. Brown, ranking member, Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; W. McLellan "Mac" Thornberry, chairman, and Adam Smith, ranking member, House Committee on Armed Services; and Edward R. Royce, chairman, and Eliot L. Engel, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Commencement Address at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado
June 2, 2016

Hello, Air Force! Thank you so much. Thank you. It is wonderful to be back at the United States Air Force Academy.

Thank you, Secretary James, for your service to our Air Force and to our Nation. Governor Hickenlooper, Academy leaders, faculty and staff—especially your outstanding Superintendent, Lieutenant General Michelle Johnson. And most of all, congratulations to the class of 2016!

As he prepares to conclude a remarkable 40-year career in the Air Force, a career that started on this day 40 years ago, please join me in saluting someone who many of you look up to and whose counsel I've relied on as well: Chief of Staff General Mark Welsh. Thank you, Mark. Thank you, Mark, and thank you, Betty.

And although he's not here today, I am proud to have nominated another Academy graduate—and a combat-tested pilot—to serve as the 21st Air Force Chief of Staff, General David Goldfein.

Now, cadets, you can take enormous pride in all the hard work that has brought you to this day. I also ask you to give a big round of applause to all your moms and dads, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles who supported you and sacrificed for you so you could be here today. Give them another round of applause.

Now, I have to tell you, some days I spend more time with the Air Force than my own family—[*laughter*]—especially on Air Force One. You take good care of me. You are always

on time. You never lose my luggage. [*Laughter*] I don't have to take off my shoes before I get on. [*Laughter*] So I'm really going to miss Air Force One—[*laughter*]—as well as the incredible airmen that I've come to know. And that includes the pilots who flew me here, Lieutenant Colonels Dan Thorn and Rob Tobler and Major Brent Ellis, all three of them proud Air Force Academy graduates. Give them a big round of applause.

Now, this Academy is one of our Nation's most selective academic institutions. Just being accepted is a big deal, a testament to your talent and your leadership. And we are particularly grateful to those of you with prior enlisted service, including Cameron Kistler, who deployed to Iraq; Robert Parati and Clayton Logan, who deployed to Afghanistan. We thank you. Your country thanks you.

Cadets, here you were tested by fire, literally. Because when you went through Beast, as General Johnson noted, Waldo Canyon was actually on fire. [*Laughter*] During Recognition, you ran to the Rock in a blizzard. So you have more than earned your unofficial motto: "Forged in fire and tempered in ice." Which is a great motto, although it does sound like something out of "Game of Thrones." [*Laughter*]

And through it all, you've become like family. You survived morning accountability formations, survived living in Sijan Hall. [*Laughter*] That night in F–1 where you learned to "earn each day." You've cheered Coach Calhoun and the Falcons as I've welcomed them to the White House to present the Commander in Chief Trophy, which Air Force has won a record 19 times.

And I look out into your ranks and I see airmen who will excel as pilots and engineers, analysts—so many specialties. The first cyber graduates in this Academy's history. And David Higgins, a marksman who's going to the Olympics in Rio—bring home the gold, David! No pressure. [*Laughter*]

In you, I see men and women of integrity and service and excellence. And you've made us all proud. And perhaps no one would have been more proud of your success than Major David Brodeur, whose sacrifice in Afghanistan we honor, and whose family joins us today—2016.

You've learned other lessons, as well, like what happens when you paint one of the planes on the Terrazzo in your class color. With such "achievements" in mind, I hereby grant amnesty to all cadets serving restrictions and confinements for minor offenses. [*Laughter*] Only minor. [*Laughter*]

Today we congratulate our newest Air Force officers. And on behalf of the American people, I thank you for choosing a life of service. In the coming weeks, some of you will head to the chapel to get married. In the years ahead, you and your families will serve around the world. As officers, you'll be responsible for the lives of those under your command, and you'll be called upon to lead with wisdom, courage, and compassion. And that's what I want to talk with you about today.

I've served as Commander in Chief for nearly 8 years now. It has been the highest honor of my life to lead the greatest military in the history of the world. It inspires me every day. Today will be the last time that I have the honor of addressing a graduating class of military officers. And there's a debate going on in our country about our Nation's role in the world. So, with that in mind, I hope you don't mind if I share some lessons I've learned as Commander in Chief, lessons that you may find useful as you lead those under your command and as we work together to keep our Nation strong and secure.

First, as you look at the world, be guided by an honest and clear-eyed assessment. Remember what you learned at this Academy: the importance of evidence and facts and judgment. And here's a fact: The United States of America remains the most powerful nation on Earth and a force for good.

We have big challenges in our country: in our politics, our economy, our society. Those are challenges we have to address. But look around. We have the world's strongest economy. Our scientists, our researchers, our entrepreneurs are global leaders in innovation. Our colleges and universities attract the best talent from around the world. Our values—freedom,

equality, opportunity—those values inspire people everywhere, including immigrants who come here, ready to work, and integrate and help renew our country.

Our standing in the world is higher. And I see it in my travels from Havana to Berlin to Ho Chi Minh City, where huge crowds of Vietnamese lined the streets, some waving American flags. So make no mistake, the United States is better positioned to lead in the 21st century than any other nation.

And here's another fact: Our military is, by a mile, the strongest in the world. Yes, after two major ground wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, we're drawing down the size of our Armed Forces, which is natural and necessary. And we have to keep improving readiness and modernizing our force. But it is undeniable: Our military is the most capable fighting force on the planet. It's not close.

Our soldiers are the best trained, best equipped land force on Earth, tested by years of combat, able to sustain power anywhere in the globe. Nobody can match our Army. Our sailors serve on aircraft carriers that can go almost anywhere and submarines that move undetected: the largest and most lethal Navy in the world, on track to surpass 300 ships. Nobody can match our Navy. Our Marines are ready at a moment's notice, "first to fight" or deliver help in a crisis, the world's only truly global expeditionary force. Nobody can match our Marines. Our coastguardsmen serve on the most advanced cutters in history, and special teams can shoot smugglers' engines, hook-and-climb or repel aboard, protecting our shores. Nobody can match our Coast Guard.

And as for our airmen, with your unequaled vigilance and reach, unrivaled fifth-generation fighters, a new generation of remotely piloted aircraft pilots, astonishing precision that calls to mind your actual class motto, "On Target, On Time," nobody can match America's Air Force.

Not only that, no other nation brings its forces together like we do in one joint force, as we saw in an operation against ISIL in Syria just last year. Air Force aircraft provided surveillance. Navy F–18s provided close air support. Army aviation assets delivered our special operators, an assault force of marines and soldiers, to the target, and one of ISIL's top leaders, Abu Sayyaf, was eliminated. That's the power of America's military. And we need to keep it that way.

And here's one more fact as you go out into the world: We are blessed to be living in the most peaceful, most prosperous era in human history. Now, that sounds controversial until you survey the history of the world. It's hard to see with all the violence and suffering in the world and what's reported on the news every day. But if you step back for a moment, think about last week, when I was in Hiroshima to remember all who were lost in a World War that killed some 60 million people—not 60,000, 60 million.

For decades, there have been no wars between major powers. Wars between nations are increasingly rare. More people live in democracies. More than 1 billion people have been lifted from extreme poverty. From the Americas to Africa to Southeast Asia, there's a new generation of young people, connected by technology and ready to make their mark. I've met them. They look up to America. They aspire to be our partner. That's the progress and the hope that we have to build on. And so much of that derives from the extraordinary leadership and sacrifice of our Air Force and the other branches of our military.

So we are well positioned. You enter this moment with a lot of good cards to play. But we face serious threats. Terrorist networks slaughter the innocent and plot attacks against our Nation. Civil wars, like in Iraq, tear countries apart and create humanitarian catastrophes and havens for terrorists. Russian aggression against Ukraine, disputes in the South China Sea, these are testing an international order that we built, where the sovereignty of nations is respected and all nations abide by the same rules. Nuclear weapons, as in North Korea, and the specter of nuclear terrorism still threaten us all.

So how to meet these threats while also seizing the incredible opportunities of this

moment in history, that's going to be your challenge: the challenge of your generation.

Which leads me to a second lesson. As we navigate this complex world, America cannot shirk the mantle of leadership. We can't be isolationist. It's not possible in this globalized, interconnected world. In these uncertain times, it's tempting sometimes to pull back and to try to wash our hands of conflicts that seem intractable, let other countries fend for themselves.

But history teaches us, from Pearl Harbor to 9/11, that oceans alone cannot protect us. Hateful ideologies can spark terror from Boston to San Bernardino.

In a global economy, it's not possible to stop trading goods and services with other countries. Weak public health systems on the other side of the world allow diseases to develop that end up reaching our shores. So we cannot turn inward. We cannot give in to isolationism. That's a false comfort. Allowing problems to fester over there makes us less secure here. So, as Americans, we have to keep leading and working with others to build the security and prosperity and justice we want in the world.

By the way, one of the most effective ways to lead and work with others is through treaties that advance our interests. Lately, there's been a mindset in Congress that just about any international treaty is somehow a violation of American sovereignty, and so the Senate almost never approves treaties anymore. They voted down a treaty to protect disabled Americans, including our veterans, while Senator and World War II veteran Bob Dole was sitting right there in the Senate Chambers in a wheelchair.

We don't always realize it, but treaties help make a lot of things in our lives possible that we take for granted, from international phone calls to mail. Those are good things. Those are not a threat to our sovereignty. I think we can all agree on that.

But also from NATO to treaties controlling nuclear weapons, treaties help keep us safe. So if we're truly concerned about China's actions in the South China Sea, for example, the Senate should help strengthen our case by approving the Law of the Sea Convention, as our military leaders have urged. And by the way, these treaties are not a new thing. The power to make treaties is written into our Constitution. Our Founding Fathers ratified lots of treaties. So it's time for the Senate to do its job and help us advance American leadership, rather than undermine it.

Now, part of the reason this is so important is because the United States remains the one indisputable nation in world affairs. I say this all the time. After 8 years, I have not gone to an international conference, summit, meeting where we were not the ones who made the agenda possible, even if we weren't hosting it. We have more alliances with other countries than anybody else, and they're the foundation of global stability and prosperity. On just about every issue, the world looks to us to set the agenda. When there's a problem around the world, they do not call Beijing or Moscow, they call us.

And we lead not by dictating to others, but by working with them as partners, by treating other countries and their peoples with respect, not by lecturing them. This isn't just the right thing to do, it's in our self-interest. It makes countries more likely to work with us, and ultimately, it makes us more secure. So we need smart, steady, principled American leadership.

And part of leading wisely is seeing threats clearly. Remember Ebola? That was a serious threat, and we took it seriously. But in the midst of it, there was hysteria. "Flights must be banned!" "Quarantine citizens!" These were actual quotes. "Seal the border!" And my favorite: "Remove Obama . . . or millions of Americans die!" [*Laughter*] That's an actual quote. [*Laughter*]

The thing is, when we panic, we don't make good decisions. So, with Ebola, instead of responding with fear, we responded with facts and responded with science and organization. And thanks to a coordinated global response, enabled by the American military and our medical workers who got in there first, we stopped the spread of Ebola in West Africa and saved countless lives and protected ourselves.

So we've got to engage with the world. We can't pull back. Of course, leading wisely also means resisting the temptation to intervene

militarily every time there's a problem or crisis in the world. History is littered with the ruins of empires and nations that overextended themselves, draining their power and influence. And so we have to chart a smarter path. As we saw in Vietnam and the Iraq war, oftentimes, the greatest damage to American credibility comes when we overreach, when we don't think through the consequences of all of our actions. And so we have to learn from our history. And that also means we're doing right by our men and women in uniform.

So, cadets, in your positions of leadership, you will be called upon to sustain this balance: to be hard headed and big hearted; guided by realism and idealism and even when these forces are sometimes at odds. We've got to have the realism to see the world as it is: where sometimes uncomfortable compromises are necessary; where we have the humility to recognize that there are limits to what even a nation as powerful as ours can do; that there may be wars we cannot always stop right away or lives we cannot save. But we also need the idealism that sees the world as it ought to be: a commitment to the universal values of democracy and equality and human rights and a willingness to stand up for them around the world, not just when it's easy, but when it's hard. Because that's who we are and that's American leadership.

Now, at times, ensuring our security requires the use of military force. And that's the third lesson I want to discuss. As Commander in Chief, I have not hesitated to use force, unilaterally where necessary, to protect the American people. Thanks to our military, intelligence, and counterterrorism professionals, bin Laden is gone. Anwar Awlaki, a leader of the Al Qaida affiliate in Yemen, is gone. Ahmed Abdi Godane, the Al Qaida leader in Somalia, he's gone. Ahmed Abu Khattala, accused in the attacks in Benghazi, captured. Mohammad Mansur, the leader of the Taliban, gone. Leader after leader in ISIL, Haji Mutazz, their number two; Mohammed Emwazi, who brutally murdered Americans; Abu Nabil, the ISIL leader in Libya—all gone. Abu Dawud, a leader of their chemical weapons program, captured.

The list goes on. Because if you target Americans, we will find you and justice will be done, and we will defend our Nation.

But even as we celebrate the courage of our troops who serve in war, even where we do not hesitate to act on behalf of our security, we should never celebrate war itself. War, no matter how noble our intentions may be, promises agony and tragedy. And no one knows this more than those who fight those wars: our wounded warriors who bear the scars, seen and unseen; our veterans, who remember their fallen comrades; our Gold Star families, whose hearts ache with pride and with loss.

We have a solemn responsibility to these Americans who sacrifice in our name. We have a responsibility to be guided by intelligence and not ideology and to never rush into war and to explore other options first. Because sending our troops into harm's way must always be a last resort.

And sometimes, those decisions are tough. I know, for example, that my decision not to conduct strikes against Syria after it used chemical weapons was controversial among some in Washington. But because we seized a diplomatic option, backed by our threat of force, nations came together, and we accomplished far more than military strikes ever could have. All of Syria's declared chemical weapons were successfully removed.

And in acting militarily, we have a responsibility, whenever possible, to build coalitions and partnerships. There are times where we have to do it alone. But on a whole lot of global problems, the United States shouldn't bear the entire burden of global security by itself. Others have to step up. That's why, as we assist and train Afghan forces, we're part of a 39-nation coalition. Our coalition against ISIL includes 66 partners, including Arab nations. We've learned that often the best way to defeat terrorists is not by sending large numbers of American ground forces to occupy and patrol foreign cities and towns. It's better to train and build up local partners; they're the ones who

have to stabilize their own countries over the long term.

Compared to when I came into office, when we had nearly 180,000 American troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, today that number is less than 15,000. Most of our troops have come home. Our local partners on the ground are in the lead. And as ISIL continues to lose territory in Iraq and Syria, these terrorists are learning the same lesson as others before them: You will never be strong enough to destroy America or our way of life. You are going to lose. But part of that is because we're on the right side of history, and part of it is because we can mobilize others to work with us.

When we use force, we have a responsibility to use it proportionally. Unlike terrorists who try to kill as many people as possible, the United States military goes to extraordinary lengths to avoid civilian casualties. It's the tragedy of war, however, whenever—whether it's conventional warfare or precise strikes—that innocents sometimes are caught in the crossfire. And these are deaths that haunt us all. Nobody more than me. As technology evolves, we can never grow numb to the consequences of our actions. We have to hold ourselves to high standards, be even more transparent, and do everything in our power to prevent the loss of innocent life. That's how America goes to war. And that's how, ultimately, America also wins the peace.

And we have a responsibility to always give our troops a clear mission, the support they need to get the job done, and a plan for what comes after. I insisted, for example, that our surge of forces in Afghanistan be matched with a transition to ensure Afghans took responsibility for their own security.

In Libya, we were right to launch an air campaign to prevent Qaddafi from massacring innocent civilians, but we didn't do enough to plan for the day after, when deep-rooted tribalism plunged Libya into disorder.

In Syria, the suffering in the civil war has been heartbreaking to see a nation shattered and hundreds of thousands killed and millions driven from their homes. It is gut wrenching. And as a father, I look at Syria's children, and I see my own. That's why we've said that the dictator, Asad, must go and why we support a moderate Syrian opposition. And it's why America provides more humanitarian aid to the Syrian people than any other nation.

But suggestions for deeper U.S. military involvement in a conflict like the Syrian civil war have to be fully thought through, rigorously examined with an honest assessment of the risks and tradeoffs. How will it alter the conflict? What comes next? When we ask those questions, we prevent the kind of mission creep that history teaches us to avoid.

If Iran and Russia want to spill their blood and treasure trying to prop up their Syrian client and get sucked into a quagmire, that is their choice. As President of the United States, I've made a different choice. And the only real solution to the Syrian conflict is a political solution, including a transition away from Asad. And that takes diplomacy, not American soldiers being dragged into the middle of another civil war in the Middle East. Our foreign policy has to be strong, but it also has to be smart.

Which brings me to my last lesson that I want to share: As powerful as our military is, we have to remember that many of the threats to our security cannot be solved by military force alone. We've got to draw on every tool, all elements of our national power.

When we invest in the development that promotes education and opportunity around the globe, it can make conflicts and military interventions less likely later. So if you want to support our military, you also have to be in favor of foreign assistance that helps some young person learn in a very poor country, because it may end up making it less necessary to send our sons and daughters somewhere to fight. You can't separate the two.

When we encourage economic and political reforms—when citizens, especially young people, in other countries have jobs and can choose their own leaders and have their human rights and dignity upheld—that can help reduce the appeal of violent extremism. We now have hope of averting the worst effects of climate change and the instability that would threaten our national security because Ameri-

can leadership helped rally the world and forge the most ambitious agreement in history to fight climate change.

So if we're going to seize the possibilities of our time, we have to use all these tools, and we have to have the courage to chart new paths. Because we negotiated with Iran and enforced strong sanctions, we reached a deal that prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear bomb, and we did it without firing a shot. With diplomacy, not war. We put aside 50 years of failed policies, and now we're seeing Americans returning to Cuba and the Cuban people looking to us, and having new hope for the future. Four decades after the conflict between us, Vietnam and America are forging a new partnership, showing the world that peace is better than war.

And perhaps no element of our power is more enduring than the example that we set ourselves: the values we live as a nation and as individuals. That's how we won the cold war: not just with the strength of our arms, but with the power of our ideas, the power of our example. It's how we defend our Nation—including our refusal to torture—because America doesn't just insist that other countries respect human rights, we have to uphold them as well and lead the way. It's how we treat those we capture. Which is one of the reasons we have to close the prison at Guantanamo, because America has to stand for rule of law.

We live our values when our military, like America itself, truly welcomes the talents of all people. We're stronger when our gay and lesbian cadets and troops can serve their country—a country they love—without hiding who they love. We're stronger when cadets, like Wasim Soomro and Ismail Baumy and James Salem, know that we celebrate their service as proud, patriotic Muslim Americans who are also serving in our Armed Forces.

And on this 40th anniversary of the first female cadets arriving at this Academy, we are stronger because General Johnson leads this institution; because Air Force General Lori Robinson leads Northern Command, our Nation's first female combatant commander; and because all combat positions in our military are now open to women like you. We're stronger because of it.

So there you have it, a few thoughts from your Commander in Chief on how to keep our military strong and our Nation secure. We can never know what the future holds. But in the not-so-distant future, when I'm no longer President, I will sleep well at night because I know that men and women like you serve to keep us free.

Take care of each other. Take care of those under your command. And as long as you keep strong that Long Blue Line, stay true to the values you've learned here: integrity, service before self, excellence. Do this, and I'm confident that we will always remain one Nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Congratulations, class of 2016. God bless you all. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in Falcon Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Betty Welsh, wife of Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, USAF; Troy Calhoun, head coach, U.S. Air Force Academy football team; Maj. David L. Brodeur, USAF, who was killed in the shooting at Kabul International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, on April 27, 2011; Ahmed Abu Khattala, suspected perpetrator of the terrorist attacks on the U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya, on September 11, 2012, who was captured during a raid in Benghazi on June 16, 2014; Sulayman Dawud al-Bakkar, also known as Abu Dawud, an operative in the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization who was captured during a raid in Iraq in February; and President Bashar al-Asad of Syria.

Statement on the Resignation of United States Solicitor General Donald B. Verrilli, Jr.
June 2, 2016

For 5 years, Solicitor General Don Verrilli has fought in our Nation's highest Court for a better future, winning landmark cases that moved America forward. Thanks to his efforts, 20 million more Americans now know the security of quality, affordable health care, we're combating discrimination so that more women and minorities can own their piece of the American Dream, we've reaffirmed our commitment to ensuring that immigrants are treated fairly, and our children will now grow up in a country where everyone has the freedom to marry the person they love.

Don has been a dedicated public servant who has helped our Nation live up to its promise of liberty and justice for all. I am grateful for his trusted counsel and friendship. And I wish Don and his family all the best in what comes next, including, hopefully, a well-deserved vacation.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Miami, Florida
June 3, 2016

Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. Well, it is so good to see all of you. Thank you so much. I see a bunch of old friends and just made some new friends, and so I'm just thrilled to be here.

First of all, I just want to thank Robert and Janice for their incredible hospitality. Thank you so much. Give them a big round of applause. Not to mention their moms, who are here—very important. Two great friends who've worked tirelessly on behalf of the Democratic Party for a long time: Stephen Bittel and Henry Muñoz. Where are they? There they are. Running for Congress, former Governor, great friend—Charlie Crist is in the house!

Not in attendance, but I just want to give a shout-out to because I think he's going to be outstanding in the United States Senate, and I just left him—Patrick Murphy. I want everybody to be working hard for Patrick. And last, but not least, somebody who—I don't know how she does it because she's everywhere all the time, nonstop, and she's a mom and a wife, and has been just an incredible supporter of my agenda. She's taken tough votes when they're the right thing to do, and she is somebody who I have counted on consistently. She's had my back. I want to make sure we have her back—Debbie Wasserman Schultz.

So I'm not going to give a long speech here because I want to take some time for questions and conversation. You may have noticed there's an election going on. [*Laughter*] One that's a little unusual, little more colorful than some in the past. And just this week, I went to Elkhart, Indiana—some of you may have seen this—the place, the city that I first visited 3 weeks after I was elected. It was the first place outside of Washington that I went to at the dawn of my Presidency. And at the time, the unemployment rate there was close to 20 percent, and about one in 10 people were either in foreclosure or at risk of losing their homes.

And I went back because this is a predominantly Republican county—I won Indiana in 2008, got whupped in 2012, but in both elections I lost Elkhart—and pointed out to them their unemployment rate now is 4.1 percent, that only one in 30 people still have trouble with their mortgage payments. This is the "RV Capital of the World," and they are now on pace for selling more RVs than they ever have. And the point I made to them is that if in fact what is driving your votes, if what you're deeply concerned about is the state of the middle class and the ability of people to work hard and get ahead and pass on opportunity to their kids and their grandkids—if that's what you're con-

cerned about, then this election shouldn't be close.

Because the economic agenda that we have put forward has not only worked to pull us out of recession, but the things that we have not yet gotten done, but have proposed—like an increase in the minimum wage or rebuilding our infrastructure and putting people back to work all across the country or investing more in research and development and emphasizing clean energy and making sure that we have trade deals that work for America, but don't result in trade wars that could destroy our economy—those things are actually going to help the middle class and create ladders of opportunity.

And in contrast, the agenda that's being presented by the party that the majority of folks in Elkhart, up until this point at least, have voted for run contrary to what everybody says is their biggest concern, which is middle class families getting squeezed. You can't make an argument that cutting taxes for the top 1 percent even further is going to help middle class families. You can't make an argument that not investing in infrastructure somehow is going to help businesses thrive and jobs get created. You can't argue that making no progress on equal pay for equal work is somehow good for two-parent households that are reliant on both paychecks.

So I said to them, I said, look, there are other issues other than the economy. Maybe what's driving you is your concern about gun rights. Maybe what's driving you is abortion or same-sex marriage. I'm happy to have those debates. I think I'm on the right side of these issues, but I'm respectful of us having a civil conversation about it. But if your concern is the economy, then this shouldn't be close.

Now, in fact, when you look at what's happening in the other party right now, there is no coherent economic theory. And the appeal that is being made is not primarily an economic one, but rather it is feeding resentments, and looking for a "they" to blame for whatever frustrations people understandably feel at any given moment in time. And so being able to say that it's immigrants, or it's gays, or it's somebody that is taking something away from you—that's the essence of the message that the Republican nominee is delivering and, frankly, has been the essence of the message that's been delivered by this Republican Congress for too long.

And it's divisive. And it's factually wrong. And it has held us back, because we would have recovered faster, stronger, now we'd be in better shape and we would certainly be laying a better foundation for our kids and our grandkids if they'd actually wanted to get stuff done, as opposed to just consolidate control of the House of Representatives or gain seats in the Senate or try to block me from whatever I proposed.

Now, that's just the facts. And I actually challenged people during my talk. I said, look, if there's anything I'm saying that you think is wrong, if you're disputing the basic argument they're making or the facts that I'm presenting, I can show you their websites, and I can show you the economic data.

So we've got the better arguments here. And the issue is going to be, do we feel the same sense of urgency? And are we engaged and are we participating to make sure that we win a White House and we get back a Congress that can move this country forward in a constructive way?

And the good news is, we've got great candidates around the country who are prepared to do that. And I'm confident that we will have, by the time of the convention, a nominee around which we can rally. And I'm going to work has hard as I can to make sure those things happen.

But just a couple of cautionary notes, and then I'll take some questions. Point number one: We have to take this election seriously. Because we live in a fascinating media environment—we were just talking, my staff and I, as we were driving over here—I don't watch television as a general rule, except sports—[*laughter*]—but they were explaining how Mr. Trump occupies about 70 percent of the news today. It's just constant. And celebrity and fame is such a driver in this culture that—and everything is so contested, because people, if they want to believe something, they can go to

this TV station or this website and block everything out—that strange things can happen in an election like this if we're not working hard, if we're not engaged, if we're not participating.

So although I am confident in our abilities to win, I want us to run scared the whole time. That's point number one.

Point number two is, it is very important for us to remind ourselves of who we are and what is best about American democracy and not slip into some of the bad habits that currently manifest themselves in the other party. We saw in San Jose these protesters starting to pelt stuff on Trump supporters. That's not what our democracy is about. That's not what you do. There's no room for violence. There's no place for shouting. There's no room for a politics that fails to at least listen to the other side, even if you vehemently disagree. Because I believe if you've got the better argument, you don't need to do that. Just go out there and organize and persuade.

Whenever I'm in a town hall or an event and I mention something that I really disagree with on the Republican policy, and people start booing when they hear the word "Republican," I always say, "Don't boo, vote!" [*Laughter*] Booing doesn't do anything. [*Laughter*] You're not getting anything done there.

And by the way, I want our democracy to work in such a way that eventually—and I've been waiting a while now—but eventually, the Republican fever breaks, and they become once again a sensible, center-right party that can have a coherent policy debate with us, and we can actually get some stuff done. But that doesn't happen if we start digging into absolutist positions and aren't willing to compromise and are resorting to some of the same kinds of tactics that they've been engaging in for quite some time.

The bottom line is, though, we have cause for optimism. I've done a lot of commencements recently and including the Air Force Academy. And these military academies are incredible, the pageantry. They march in and at the end of it, they throw up their hats, and the Thunderbirds fly over, and it's beautiful, it's amazing. And these young people, they just make you optimistic. They're serving their country. They come from every walk of life. I do have to salute and shake hands with a thousand of them—[*laughter*]—and so I get, like, pitcher's arm at the end of it. [*Laughter*] They're all really young and excited to see me, so they're all like—[*laughter*]—"Mr. President, it's great to see you!" [*Laughter*] "I'm proud of you." [*Laughter*]

But I've been doing these commencements, and you talk to these young people—they're great. And they're smart, and they're hopeful, and they're sophisticated, and they want to contribute to the world. And so, in each of the commencements, because they've been so overloaded with negative stuff and name calling and bad news, I have to remind them, I said, look, as tough as things seem right now, as frustrating as our politics may be, as terrible as some of the events you see around the world may be, if you had to choose one time in American history or world history in which to be born and you didn't know ahead of time whether you were going to be male or female, Black, White, gay, straight—you didn't know who you were going to be, you'd choose now.

We forget sometimes, we take for granted the incredible progress that we've made across every dimension of the economy, security, a society that's more tolerant and more accepting of diversity. We've got a lot of stuff to build on. But we've got to make sure we get this election right.

And that's where you come in. Supporting the DSCC, supporting the DCCC, supporting the DNC. I can't do it alone. Debbie, Henry, Stephen—they can't do it alone. We're going to need you. And your presence here today makes all the difference. So thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:18 p.m. at the residence of Robert and Janice Rubenstein. In his remarks, he referred to Stephen H. Bittel and Henry R. Muñoz III, national finance committee cochairs, and Rep. Deborah Wasserman Schultz, in her capacity as chair, Democratic National Committee; Rep. Patrick E. Murphy; and Donald J. Trump, chairman and

president, Trump Organization, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
June 4, 2016

Elkhart, Indiana, was the first town I visited as President. I'd been on the job for 3 weeks, and we were just a few months into the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes. Elkhart was hit harder than most. Unemployment there peaked at nearly 20 percent shortly after my visit. Nearly one in five people there were out of work.

This week, I returned to Elkhart. Unemployment there has now fallen to around 4 percent. More families are back on sturdy ground. More are covered by health insurance. More of their kids are graduating from high school. And it's no accident. It's because people there worked hard and sacrificed and looked out for each other.

But it's also because we made a series of smart decisions early in my Presidency: to rescue the auto industry, to help families refinance their homes, to invest in things like high-tech manufacturing, clean energy, and the infrastructure that creates good new jobs, not to mention the job training that helps folks earn new skills to fill those jobs.

The results are clear. America's businesses have created 14.5 million new jobs over 75 straight months. We've seen the first sustained manufacturing growth since the nineties. We've cut unemployment by more than half. Another 20 million Americans have health insurance. And we've cut our deficits by nearly 75 percent.

We haven't fixed everything. Wages, while growing again, need to grow faster. The gap between the rich and everyone else is still way too wide. Republicans in Congress have repeatedly blocked investments and initiatives that would have created jobs faster. But the middle class isn't getting squeezed because of minorities or immigrants or moochers or anyone else we're told to blame for our problems. If we're going to fix what needs fixing, we can't divide ourselves. We've got to come together, around our common economic goals. We've got to push back against policies that protect powerful special interests and push for a better deal for all working Americans.

That's the choice you'll get to make this year: between policies that raise wages and policies that won't; between strengthening Social Security and making it more generous, or making it harder to help people save and retire; between strengthening the rules we put on Wall Street to prevent another crisis, or dismantling them; between a Tax Code that's fair for working families, or wasteful tax cuts for a fortunate few at the very top.

Over the past 7 years, we've proven that progress is possible. But it's not inevitable. It depends on us. It depends on the choices we make. And if we come together around our common values and our belief in opportunity for everyone who puts in the effort, then we'll deliver on a brighter future for all of us.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:45 a.m. on June 3 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on June 4. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 3, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 4. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of Muhammad Ali
June 4, 2016

Muhammad Ali was "the Greatest." Period. If you just asked him, he'd tell you. He'd tell you he was the double greatest, that he'd "handcuffed lightning, thrown thunder into jail." But what made "the Champ" the greatest—what truly separated him from everyone else—is that everyone else would tell you pretty much the same thing.

Like everyone else on the planet, Michelle and I mourn his passing. But we're also grateful to God for how fortunate we are to have known him, if just for a while; for how fortunate we all are that the Greatest chose to grace our time.

In my private study, just off the Oval Office, I keep a pair of his gloves on display, just under that iconic photograph of him: the young champ, just 22 years old, roaring like a lion over a fallen Sonny Liston. I was too young when it was taken to understand who he was: still Cassius Clay, already an Olympic Gold Medal winner, yet to set out on a spiritual journey that would lead him to his Muslim faith, exile him at the peak of his power, and set the stage for his return to greatness with a name as familiar to the downtrodden in the slums of Southeast Asia and the villages of Africa as it was to cheering crowds in Madison Square Garden.

"I am America," he once declared. "I am the part you won't recognize. But get used to me—Black, confident, cocky; my name, not yours; my religion, not yours; my goals, my own. Get used to me."

That's the Ali I came to know as I came of age, not just as skilled a poet on the mic as he was a fighter in the ring, but a man who fought for what was right, a man who fought for us. He stood with King and Mandela, stood up when it was hard, spoke out when others wouldn't. His fight outside the ring would cost him his title and his public standing. It would earn him enemies on the left and the right, make him reviled, and nearly send him to jail. But Ali stood his ground. And his victory helped us get used to the America we recognize today.

He wasn't perfect, of course. For all his magic in the ring, he could be careless with his words and full of contradictions as his faith evolved. But his wonderful, infectious, even innocent spirit ultimately won him more fans than foes, maybe because in him, we hoped to see something of ourselves. Later, as his physical powers ebbed, he became an even more powerful force for peace and reconciliation around the world. We saw a man who said he was so mean he'd make medicine sick reveal a soft spot, visiting children with illness and disability around the world, telling them they, too, could become the greatest. We watched a hero light a torch and fight his greatest fight of all on the world stage once again, a battle against the disease that ravaged his body, but couldn't take the spark from his eyes.

Muhammad Ali shook up the world. And the world is better for it. We are all better for it. Michelle and I send our deepest condolences to his family, and we pray that the greatest fighter of them all finally rests in peace.

NOTE: The statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as a statement by the President and the First Lady.

Statement on the 35th Anniversary of HIV/AIDS in the United States
June 5, 2016

On June 5, 1981, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published a report on what would later be understood as the first documented cases of AIDS. The past 35 years tell a story that bends from uncertainty, fear, and loss toward resilience, innovation, and hope.

We've learned that stigma and silence don't just fuel ignorance, they foster transmission

and give life to a plague. We've seen that testing, treatment, education, and acceptance can not only save and extend lives, but fight the discrimination that halted progress for too long. And we've reaffirmed that most American of ideas: that ordinary citizens can speak out, band ourselves together like a breathtaking quilt, and change the course of our communities and our Nation for the better.

Over these 35 years, American ingenuity and leadership has shaped the world's response to this crisis. From the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program to the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), we've saved millions of lives at home and around the world. My administration implemented our Nation's first comprehensive national HIV/AIDS strategy, and we've updated it through 2020.

We've invested in research and evidence-based practices that have given us revolutionary tools like treatment as prevention and pre-exposure prophylaxis. We've made critical investments to help eliminate waiting lists for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program. We've continued efforts to support the promise of a vaccine. And the Affordable Care Act has resulted in millions of individuals gaining affordable, high-quality health coverage, all without denial for preexisting conditions like HIV.

While there is more work to do—the economically disadvantaged; gay and bisexual men, especially those who are young and Black; women of color; and transgender women all continue to face huge disparities—I'm confident that if we build upon the steps we've taken, we can finish the job.

Nearly 5 years ago, I said that an AIDS-free generation is within reach, and today, the global community is committed to ending this epidemic by 2030. This will take American leadership, smart investments, and a commitment to ensure that all communities are heard and included as we move forward.

So today let's call the names. Let's remember those we lost too soon. And let's rededicate ourselves to ending this epidemic once and for all.

Statement on the Observance of Ramadan
June 5, 2016

As another new Moon heralds the start of the holy month of Ramadan, Michelle and I extend our best wishes to Muslims across the United States and around the world. For many, this month is an opportunity to focus on reflection and spiritual growth, forgiveness, patience and resilience, compassion for those less fortunate, and unity across communities. Each lesson is profound on its own and, taken together, forms a harmonious whole. It's also a time of year that brings some of the best dishes to the table across the world as families and neighbors gather for iftar.

Here in the United States, we are blessed with Muslim communities as diverse as our Nation itself. There are those whose heritage can be traced back to the very beginning of our Nation, as well as those who have only just arrived. Doctors, lawyers, artists, teachers, scientists, community organizers, public servants, and military members, each night will all break their fasts together in cities across America.

As Muslim Americans celebrate the holy month, I am reminded that we are one American family. I stand firmly with Muslim American communities in rejection of the voices that seek to divide us or limit our religious freedoms or civil rights. I stand committed to safeguarding the civil rights of all Americans, no matter their religion or appearance. I stand in celebration of our common humanity and dedication to peace and justice for all.

And in this month of reflection, we cannot forget the millions of lives that have been displaced by conflict and struggle, across the world, and in our own backyards. Far too many Muslims may not be able to observe Ramadan from the comfort of their own homes this year or afford to celebrate Eid with their children. We must continue working together to alleviate the suffering of these individuals. This

sacred time reminds us of our common obligations to uphold the dignity of every human being. We will continue to welcome immigrants and refugees into our Nation, including those who are Muslim.

As I have done throughout my Presidency, I look forward to opening the doors of the White House to Muslim Americans during this special occasion, this year for an Eid celebration marking the end of Ramadan. I can think of no better way to mark my administration's last celebration of Ramadan as President than to honor the contributions of Muslims in America and across the world for Eid. *Ramadan Kareem.*

Remarks Honoring the 2016 Super Bowl Champion Denver Broncos
June 6, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody. Good afternoon. Have a seat, have a seat. Welcome to the White House.

Now, I have to tell you that these guys were out here practicing a little earlier. [*Laughter*] So before we get started, I just need to make sure that we're all set, that they were paying attention. So let me just say: Omaha! Omaha! 44 is Mike! Bags Montana! [*Laughter*] I don't know, it doesn't seem to work as well for me. [*Laughter*]

Let's give it up for the Super Bowl Champion Denver Broncos! [*Applause*] Yes! We have some big Broncos fans in the house, including Mayor Hancock from the great city of Denver, outstanding Members of Congress, the delegation. I want to recognize Broncos CEO Joe Ellis, a couple of your former quarterbacks: GM John Elway, Coach Gary Kubiak.

And let's give a big round of applause to Mrs. Annabel Bowlen. As many of you know, Annabel is here on behalf of the Bowlen family and her husband Pat, the longtime Broncos owner who's inspiring all of us with his courageous fight against Alzheimer's. And it's only fitting that when they won the Super Bowl in February, John declared from the podium: "This one is for Pat!" And I was just—we were backstage talking, the record that Pat was able to put together, going to more Super Bowls than losing seasons, that's pretty remarkable. You're not going to see that duplicated many places; that's a testimony to what an extraordinary owner he has been and continues to be.

Pat and Annabel have led this organization for 32 successful years; that rivals just about any other franchise in football. In that time, the Broncos have, as I said earlier, gone time and time again to the Super Bowl, and last year was a high-water mark, with a third Super Bowl trophy and a dominating win over Carolina.

That doesn't mean it was always pretty—or ever pretty. [*Laughter*] Coach has acknowledged this is a gritty, hard-nosed group of grinders. Last season, the Broncos won an NFL-record 11 games by a touchdown or less. And you don't do that without one of the greatest defenses of all time. Now, I'm a Bears fan—1985 was pretty good. Elway remembers. [*Laughter*] But I've got to admit, this one was pretty good too. [*Laughter*]

It all starts with Super Bowl MVP Von Miller, who terrorized opponents from the edge all season long. In the Super Bowl and the AFC Championship game, he had five sacks, two forced fumbles, an interception. Not bad for a guy who prides himself on his collection of eyeglasses—[*laughter*]—and claims to have been a geek all his life. We also saw him on "Dancing With the Stars." I think he's wearing his dance shoes today. Where were they? They were shiny and impressive. [*Laughter*]

Von was not alone. There was his partner on the opposite side, DeMarcus Ware. You had an extraordinary defensive line, a lockdown secondary. All in all, coordinator Wade Phillips's defense led the league in 19 statistical categories, including total defense, passing defense, and sacks. And down the stretch, they smothered three of the top four offenses in football.

And then, there was an offense that always seemed to come up big when it needed to. There's running backs C.J. Anderson and Ronnie Hillman. Receivers Emmanuel Sanders and Demaryius Thomas. And we can't forget to mention

the heart and soul of this team's offensive firepower, kicker Brandon McManus! [*Laughter*]

And then, there's this guy from the commercials. [*Laughter*] It doesn't matter whether you need insurance—[*laughter*]—pizza—[*laughter*]—a Buick—[*laughter*]—I mean, you basically can stock your whole household with stuff this guy is selling. [*Laughter*] You know where to turn: It's Peyton Manning! Where'd Peyton go? He's around here somewhere. There he is.

I have to say, I'm so pleased to be able to host Peyton here at the White House before I left. Anybody who has been a football fan has watched what is one of the greatest Hall of Fame careers ever, racking up more wins, more MVPs, more passing yards, more touchdown passes than anybody in history. The only quarterback to lead two different teams to Super Bowl wins. We were all obviously a little disappointed to see him hang it up this spring. But as somebody who is just a little bit older than he is, I was sympathetic—[*laughter*]—to the idea that running around with these guys, it takes its toll. But it is great to see somebody with a career like that, who always conducted himself on the field and off the field the way he did, to be able to go out on top. So please give a big round of applause for Peyton Manning.

Thank you. Yes, Peyton and I were talking back—and he said, yes, you should try it, don't overstay your welcome. [*Laughter*] Yes. But I've got term limits, so I had no choice—I can't. [*Laughter*]

Of course, this team is far more than a collection of players. The Broncos are a way of life, not just in Colorado, but throughout the Mountain West. They call it Broncos Country. Sold out just about every game in Denver since 1970. I've heard how loud that stadium can get—back in 2008, I gave my convention speech at Mile High. Thank you for letting me borrow it just for a little bit. I have a feeling it's a little louder after Von sacks Tom Brady. [*Laughter*] But it was pretty loud on that day.

And for all the love the fans give to this team, the Broncos gave it right back. In just the last year, players have served the community more than 360 times, from holding fitness clinics to mentoring young people to honoring our troops. All told, the Broncos have distributed more than $25 million to local charities since 1993.

And earlier today Peyton and the guys spent some time with our wounded warriors. And nothing is—there's nothing I appreciate more than when outstanding athletes like this take the time to meet with our wounded warriors and are reminded of the fact that as much fun as this is, as great as football is as a part of our lives, it only happens because of the extraordinary sacrifice of our men and women in uniform. So we're very grateful to them for that.

So on and off the field, these guys are champs. Apparently, John Elway knows what he's doing. [*Laughter*] Coach knows what he's doing, the ownership knows what they're doing, and the players know what they're doing. And I assume that they're looking for another run.

I will continue to root for the Bears—[*laughter*]—but I've got to give this organization credit for having done an extraordinary job. And this is a well-deserved celebration of an extraordinary season.

So please give, one more time, Super Bowl Champion Denver Broncos a big round of applause! Good job.

Head Coach Gary W. Kubiak. Thank you, Mr. President. As you said before, unfortunately, the great leader of this organization, this team, is not here today. But on behalf of Mr. Bowlen, our entire organization, thank you so much for you and your staff allowing us to be here today and share this special moment.

I am so proud of our fans, our organization, our coaches, but most importantly, these players. They gave it up for each other, and they went and achieved something special: They brought home a third world championship to the city of Denver. And I'm so proud to be a part of that, but this makes it even more so special. So thank you, and without further ado, Annabel is going to come up, and the captains, and present some——

The President. All right, what have we've got, Annabel?

[*At this point, the President was presented with a team jersey.*]

The President. Oh, look at that!

Annabel Bowlen, wife of Owner Pat Bowlen. This is for you.

The President. That is a good-looking jersey right there. Number 44. I think Mr. Sanders said I might still be able to be a wide receiver? [*Laughter*] I said, it's been a while since I ran 4.4 40. [*Laughter*] But that is wonderful. Thank you so much. I appreciate it and thank you so much. I need a helmet. [*Laughter*] You get knocked around here in Washington quite a bit. [*Laughter*] So thank you. These are beautiful. Why don't we strike this podium and we can get a good picture? Come on, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:24 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Von Miller and DeMarcus Ware, outside linebackers, Denver Broncos; and Tom Brady, quarterback, National Football League's New England Patriots.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India
June 7, 2016

President Obama. Well, it is a great pleasure to welcome back my friend Prime Minister Modi and the Indian delegation to the Oval Office.

I still have fond memories of being honored by the Prime Minister's invitation to participate in Republic Day celebrations in India and the incredible hospitality and warmth that was shown by the people of India during our visit.

As the world's two largest democracies and countries with strong bonds between our peoples, our businesses, our scientific and educational communities, it's natural that the United States and India have deepened and broadened our partnership across a whole range of issues.

In Paris, the joining of forces between India and the United States helped to forge a historic agreement that can effectively deal with climate change. And we discussed how we can, as quickly as possible, bring the Paris Agreement into force, how we can make sure that the climate financing that's necessary for India to be able to embark on the bold vision for solar energy and clean energy that Prime Minister Modi has laid out can be accomplished. And the agreements and memoranda that we reached, I think, reflect the seriousness with which both of us take the climate change issue.

We discussed, in addition, the progress that we've made around civil nuclear energy. And I indicated our support for India becoming part of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the abilities for technologies that are critical to India's development and prosperity being available. And we also discussed in that same context our important work together around the nonproliferation of nuclear materials and technologies that could end up falling into the wrong hands. And I very much appreciated the Prime Minister's very effective interventions and participation in our Nuclear Security Summit.

Of course, a key priority for both of us is how to promote economic prosperity and opportunity and poverty alleviation for our people. And we continued to discuss a wide range of areas where we can cooperate more effectively in order to promote jobs, to promote investment, to promote trade, and to promote greater opportunities for our people—particularly young people—in both of our countries.

And—I'm sorry.

[*At this point, the interpreter continued her translation of President Obama's remarks into Hindi. President Obama then continued his remarks as follows.*]

And we discussed both towards the end of our meeting, as well as—and intend to discuss during our lunch meeting important regional and security issues, because India and the United States have a shared vision of peace, of democracy, of countries resolving conflicts dip-

lomatically rather than through war. And when we work together on the international stage, we can make significant progress not only on traditional security challenges, but also new security challenges like cybersecurity that are going to be increasingly important in the 21st century.

So again, I want to thank my friend Prime Minister Modi for his leadership. I know that whenever he visits, it is a source of great pride and excitement not only for the people of India, but the remarkable Indian American community here in the United States that are a symbol and a testament of the deep bonds of friendship and family that exist between our two countries.

Prime Minister Modi. I, too, would like to thank my very close friend, President Obama, for this meeting today. We are meeting once again. And I'm also grateful to the Congress of the United States for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to address them tomorrow.

We've had a discussion on a range of issues, and I think it's not just the diplomatic strength of these discussions, but also the friendliness, the strength that comes out of that that is very important.

Of course, India and the United States have been working together, and we will continue to do so. But what we have seen over the last 2 years is that India and the United States have been cooperating on issues that are of global concern. And we've been working shoulder to shoulder to achieve results that are of benefit to the entire world. Whether we're talking about nuclear security, global warming, the concerns of terrorism, the Paris Agreement—the initiative that was taken there—we have been working shoulder to shoulder. And I feel proud that we are not just two friends and two countries that are working together, we are proud of the leadership role that we have taken on, and we will continue to do so.

Today we've had a discussion, as I said, on a range of issues. We've spoken about taking our economic relationship to new heights. We've talked about technical support. We have spoken about the energy sector, about funding—financing for clean energy. We've spoken about cybersecurity and the fact that India also leads a role as far as the Internet is concerned. So these are all a range of issues that we've had very good discussions on.

India is a young country. We have a population of 800 million who are below 35 years of age. And in fact, the United States is well aware of the talent that India has. We and the United States can work together to bring forward this talent and use it for the benefit of mankind, to use it for the benefit of innovations, and to use it to achieve new progress and touch new heights. We will continue to do so in future too.

India has made a name for itself as the fastest growing economy in the world. And India and the United States also are the world's biggest democracies. Both countries need to widen their cooperation, the scope of their cooperation, and find new areas to cooperate in that would assist in finding solutions for the world—for also for the developing nations of the world. We will meet again at the G–20 summit. And by that time, I expect that we would have moved forward on several issues. Climate justice is also an issue that we will be taking up.

And we also have the MTCR; we have the Nuclear Suppliers Group. And the help and support that my friend President Obama has extended is something that I will always cherish and remember. Once again, I'd like to thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:01 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Prime Minister Modi referred to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Prime Minister Modi spoke in Hindi, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement—The United States and India: Enduring Global Partners in the 21st Century

June 7, 2016

1) The Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and the President of the United States of America Barack Obama met today in the White House during an official working visit of Prime Minister Modi to the United States. Marking their third major bilateral summit, the leaders reviewed the deepening strategic partnership between the United States and India that is rooted in shared values of freedom, democracy, universal human rights, tolerance and pluralism, equal opportunities for all citizens, and rule of law. They pledged to pursue new opportunities to bolster economic growth and sustainable development, promote peace and security at home and around the world, strengthen inclusive, democratic governance and respect for universal human rights, and provide global leadership on issues of shared interest.

2) The leaders welcomed the significant progress made in bilateral relations between India and the United States during their tenure, in accordance with the roadmaps set out in the Joint Statements issued during Prime Minister Modi's visit to the United States in September 2014 and President Obama's visit to India in January 2015. The leaders affirmed the increasing convergence in their strategic perspectives and emphasized the need to remain closely invested in each other's security and prosperity.

Advancing U.S.-India Global Leadership on Climate and Clean Energy

3) The steps that the two Governments have taken in the last two years through the U.S.-India Contact Group, including by addressing the nuclear liability issue, inter alia, through India's ratification of the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage, have laid a strong foundation for a long-term partnership between U.S. and Indian companies for building nuclear power plants in India. Culminating a decade of partnership on civil nuclear issues, the leaders welcomed the start of preparatory work on site in India for six AP 1000 reactors to be built by Westinghouse and noted the intention of India and the U.S. Export-Import Bank to work together toward a competitive financing package for the project. Once completed, the project would be among the largest of its kind, fulfilling the promise of the U.S.-India civil nuclear agreement and demonstrating a shared commitment to meet India's growing energy needs while reducing reliance on fossil fuels. Both sides welcomed the announcement by the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd, and Westinghouse that engineering and site design work will begin immediately and the two sides will work toward finalizing the contractual arrangements by June 2017.

4) The United States and India share common climate and clean energy interests and are close partners in the fight against climate change. Leadership from both countries helped galvanize global action to combat climate change and culminated in the historic Paris Agreement reached last December. Both countries are committed to working together and with others to promote full implementation of the Paris Agreement to address the urgent threats posed by climate change. India and the United States recognize the urgency of climate change and share the goal of enabling entry into force of the Paris Agreement as early as possible. The United States reaffirms its commitment to join the Agreement as soon as possible this year. India similarly has begun its processes to work toward this shared objective. The leaders reiterated their commitment to pursue low greenhouse gas emission development strategies in the pre-2020 period and to develop long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies. In addition, the two countries resolved to work to adopt an HFC amendment in 2016 with increased financial support from donor countries to the Multilateral Fund to help developing countries

with implementation, and an ambitious phasedown schedule, under the Montreal Protocol pursuant to the Dubai Pathway. The leaders resolved to work together at the upcoming International Civil Aviation Organization Assembly to reach a successful outcome to address greenhouse gas emissions from international aviation. Further, the two countries will pursue under the leadership of the G20 strong outcomes to promote improved heavy-duty vehicle standards and efficiency in accordance with their national priorities and capabilities.

5) The leaders welcomed the signing of an MOU to Enhance Cooperation on Energy Security, Clean Energy and Climate Change, and an MOU on Cooperation in Gas Hydrates.

6) Reflecting Prime Minister Modi's call to embrace wildlife conservation as a development imperative, the leaders welcomed the signing of an MOU to enhance cooperation on Wildlife Conservation and Combating Wildlife Trafficking.

Clean Energy Finance

7) The United States supports the Government of India's ambitious national goals to install 175 GW of renewable power which includes 100 GW from solar power.

8) The United States welcomes the launch of the International Solar Alliance (ISA), recognizes the critical role it can play in the development and deployment of solar power, and intends pursuing membership in the ISA. To this end, and to strengthen ISA together, the United States and India will jointly launch the third Initiative of the ISA which will focus on off-grid solar for energy access at the Founding Conference of ISA in September, 2016 in India. The United States also remains committed, with other developed countries, to the goal of jointly mobilizing $100 billion per year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation and adaptation action.

9) The United States is committed to bring to bear its technical capacity, resources and private sector, and is jointly launching with India new efforts, to spur greater investment in India's renewable energy sector, including efforts that can serve as a model for other ISA Member Countries. In particular, the United States and India today are announcing: the creation of a $20 million U.S.-India Clean Energy Finance (USICEF) initiative, equally supported by the United States and India, which is expected to mobilize up to $400 million to provide clean and renewable electricity to up to 1 million households by 2020; a commitment to establish the U.S.-India Clean Energy Hub as the coordinating mechanism to focus United States Government efforts that, in partnership with leading Indian financial institutions, will increase renewable energy investment in India; a $40 million U.S.-India Catalytic Solar Finance Program, equally supported by the United States and India, that, by providing needed liquidity to smaller-scale renewable energy investments, particularly in poorer, rural villages that are not connected to the grid, could mobilize up to $1 billion of projects; the expansion of handholding support to Indian utilities that are scaling up rooftop solar and continuation of successful cooperation with USAID on "Greening the Grid".

10) The United States and India also remain committed to the goals of Mission Innovation, which they jointly launched during COP–21 in Paris to double their respective clean energy research and development (R&D) investment in five years. Toward this end, the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to cooperate on research and development, including through the announcement of an upcoming $30 million public-private research effort in smart grid and grid storage.

Strengthening Global Nonproliferation

11) The President thanked the Prime Minister for his substantive contribution to and active participation in 2016 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C., and welcomed his offer to host a Summit on Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism in 2018. The United States and India will work together to combat the threat of terrorists accessing and using chemical, biological, nuclear and radiological materials.

12) Recalling their shared commitment to preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, the leaders looked forward to India's imminent entry into the Missile Technology Control Regime. President Obama welcomed India's application to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), and re-affirmed that India is ready for membership. The United States called on NSG Participating Governments to support India's application when it comes up at the NSG Plenary later this month. The United States also re-affirmed its support for India's early membership of the Australia Group and Wassenaar Arrangement.

Securing the Domains: Land, Maritime, Air, Space, and Cyber

13) The leaders applauded the completion of a roadmap for cooperation under the 2015 U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region, which will serve as a guide for collaboration in the years to come. They resolved that the United States and India should look to each other as priority partners in the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean region.

14) They welcomed the inaugural meeting of the Maritime Security Dialogue. Owing to mutual interest in maritime security and maritime domain awareness, the leaders welcomed the conclusion of a technical arrangement for sharing of maritime "White Shipping" information.

15) The leaders affirmed their support for U.S.-India cooperation in promoting maritime security. They reiterated the importance they attach to ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight and exploitation of resources as per international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and settlement of territorial disputes by peaceful means.

16) The leaders applauded the enhanced military to military cooperation between the two countries especially in joint exercises, training and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR). They expressed their desire to explore agreements which would facilitate further expansion of bilateral defense cooperation in practical ways. In this regard, they welcomed the finalization of the text of the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA).

17) Noting that the U.S.-India defense relationship can be an anchor of stability, and given the increasingly strengthened cooperation in defense, the United States hereby recognizes India as a Major Defense Partner. As such:

- The United States will continue to work toward facilitating technology sharing with India to a level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners. The leaders reached an understanding under which India would receive license-free access to a wide range of dual-use technologies in conjunction with steps that India has committed to take to advance its export control objectives.
- In support of India's Make In India initiative, and to support the development of robust defense industries and their integration into the global supply chain, the United States will continue to facilitate the export of goods and technologies, consistent with U.S. law, for projects, programs and joint ventures in support of official U.S.-India defense cooperation.

18) The leaders also committed to enhance cooperation in support of the Government of India's Make In India Initiative and expand the co-production and co-development of technologies under the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI). They welcomed the establishment of new DTTI working groups to include agreed items covering Naval Systems, Air Systems, and other Weapons Systems. The leaders announced the finalization of the text of an Information Exchange Annex under the Joint Working Group on Aircraft Carrier Technology Cooperation.

19) President Obama thanked Prime Minister Modi for his government's support for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) missions in India, including a recovery mission that resulted in the recent repatriation of remains of the United States Service Mem-

bers missing since the Second World War. The leaders announced their commitment to future DPAA missions.

20) As space faring nations, India and the United States acknowledge that outer space should be an ever expanding frontier of human endeavour, and look forward to deepening their cooperation on earth observation, Mars exploration, space education and manned space flight. The leaders welcomed the progress toward establishment of an ISRO-NASA Heliophysics Working Group as well as toward finalization of a Memorandum of Understanding for exchange of earth observation satellite data.

21) The leaders emphasized that cyberspace enables economic growth and development, and reaffirmed their commitment to an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable Internet, underpinned by the multistakeholder model of Internet governance. They committed to deepen cooperation on cybersecurity and welcomed the understanding reached to finalize the Framework for the U.S.-India Cyber Relationship in the near term. They committed to enhance cyber collaboration on critical infrastructure, cybercrime, and malicious cyber activity by state and non-state actors, capacity building, and cybersecurity research and development, and to continue discussions on all aspects of trade in technology and related services, including market access. They have committed to continue dialogue and engagement in Internet governance fora, including in ICANN, IGF and other venues, and to support active participation by all stakeholders of the two countries in these fora. The leaders committed to promote stability in cyberspace based on the applicability of international law including the United Nations Charter, the promotion of voluntary norms of responsible state behavior during peacetime, and the development and implementation of practical confidence building measures between states.

22) In this context, they affirmed their commitment to the voluntary norms that no country should conduct or knowingly support online activity that intentionally damages critical infrastructure or otherwise impairs the use of it to provide services to the public; that no country should conduct or knowingly support activity intended to prevent national computer security incident response teams from responding to cyber incidents, or use its own teams to enable online activity that is intended to do harm; that every country should cooperate, consistent with its domestic law and international obligations, with requests for assistance from other states in mitigating malicious cyber activity emanating from its territory; and that no country should conduct or knowingly support ICT-enabled theft of intellectual property, including trade secrets or other confidential business information, with the intent of providing competitive advantages to its companies or commercial sectors.

Standing Together Against Terrorism and Violent Extremism

23) The leaders acknowledged the continued threat posed to human civilization by terrorism and condemn the recent terrorist incidents from Paris to Pathankot, from Brussels to Kabul. They resolved to redouble their efforts, bilaterally and with other like-minded countries, to bring to justice the perpetrators of terrorism anywhere in the world and the infrastructure that supports them.

24) Building on the January 2015 U.S.-India Joint Statement commitment to make the U.S.-India partnership a defining counterterrorism relationship for the 21st Century, as well as the September 2015 U.S.-India Joint Declaration on Combatting Terrorism, the leaders announced further steps to deepen collaboration against the full spectrum of terrorist threats.

25) The leaders committed to strengthen cooperation against terrorist threats from extremist groups, such as Al-Qa'ida, Da'esh/ISIL, Jaish-e Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, D Company and their affiliates, including through deepened collaboration on UN terrorist designations. In this context, they directed their officials to identify specific new areas of collaboration at the next meeting of U.S.-India Counterterrorism Joint Working Group.

26) Recognizing an important milestone in the U.S.-India counterterrorism partnership, the leaders applauded the finalization of an arrangement to facilitate the sharing of terrorist screening information. They also called for Pakistan to bring the perpetrators of the 2008 Mumbai and 2016 Pathankot terrorist attacks to justice.

27) The leaders affirmed their support for a UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism that advances and strengthens the framework for global cooperation and reinforces that no cause or grievance justifies terrorism.

Bolstering Economic and Trade Ties

28) The leaders highlighted the strong and expanding economic relationship between the United States and India and committed to support sustainable, inclusive, and robust economic growth, and common efforts to stimulate consumer demand, job creation, skill development and innovation in their respective countries.

29) In order to substantially increase bilateral trade, they pledged to explore new opportunities to break down barriers to the movement of goods and services, and support deeper integration into global supply chains, thereby creating jobs and generating prosperity in both economies. They look forward to the second annual Strategic and Commercial Dialogue in India later this year to identify concrete steps in this regard. They also commended the increased engagement on trade and investment issues under the Trade Policy Forum (TPF) and encouraged substantive results for the next TPF later this year. They welcomed the engagement of U.S. private sector companies in India's Smart City program.

30) The leaders applauded the strong bonds of friendship between the 1.5 billion peoples of India and the United States that have provided a solid foundation for a flourishing bilateral partnership, noting that two-way travel for tourism, business, and education has seen unprecedented growth, including more than one million travelers from India to the United States in 2015, and similar number from the United States to India. The leaders resolved to facilitate greater movement of professionals, investors and business travelers, students, and exchange visitors between their countries to enhance people-to-people contact as well as their economic and technological partnership. To this end, they welcomed the signing of an MOU for Development of an International Expedited Traveler Initiative (also known as the Global Entry Program) and resolved to complete within the next three months the procedures for India's entry into the Global Entry Program.

31) The leaders recognized the fruitful exchanges in August 2015 and June 2016 on the elements required in both countries to pursue a U.S.-India Totalization Agreement and resolved to continue discussions later this year.

32) Recognizing the importance of fostering an enabling environment for innovation and empowering entrepreneurs, the United States welcomes India's hosting of the 2017 Global Entrepreneurship Summit.

33) The leaders welcomed the enhanced engagement on intellectual property rights under the High Level Working Group on Intellectual Property and reaffirmed their commitment to use this dialogue to continue to make concrete progress on IPR issues by working to enhance bilateral cooperation among the drivers of innovation and creativity in both countries.

34) The United States welcomes India's interest in joining the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, as India is a dynamic part of the Asian economy.

Expanding Cooperation: Science & Technology and Health

35) The leaders affirmed their nations' mutual support in exploring the most fundamental principles of science as embodied in the arrangement reached to cooperate on building a Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory (LIGO) in India in the near future and welcomed the formation of the India-U.S. Joint Oversight Group to facilitate agency coordination of funding and oversight of the project.

36) The leaders look forward to India's participation at the September 2016 Our Ocean Conference in Washington, D.C. as well as holding of the first India-U.S. Oceans Dialogue later this year, to strengthen cooperation in marine science, ocean energy, managing and protecting ocean biodiversity, marine pollution, and sustainable use of ocean resources.

37) The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the Global Health Security Agenda and the timely implementation of its objectives. The Prime Minister noted India's role on the Steering Group and its leadership in the areas of anti-microbial resistance and immunization. The President noted the United States' commitment to support, undergo, and share a Joint External Evaluation in collaboration with the World Health Organization.

38) The leaders recognized the global threat posed by multi-drug–resistant tuberculosis (MDR–TB) and committed to continue collaboration in the area of tuberculosis and to share respective best practices.

39) The leaders noted the growing threat of non-communicable diseases and the urgent need to address the risk factors by, inter alia, promoting healthy lifestyles, controlling sugar and salt intake, promoting physical activity especially among children and youth and strengthening efforts to curb tobacco use. The leaders also reiterated the importance of holistic approaches to health and wellness, and of promoting the potential benefits of holistic approaches by synergizing modern and traditional systems of medicine, including Yoga.

40) The leaders strongly endorsed expansion of the Indo-U.S. Vaccine Action Program, which is fostering public-private research partnerships focused on the development and evaluation of vaccines to prevent tuberculosis, dengue, chikungunya and other globally important infectious diseases.

Global Leadership

41) The leaders reaffirmed their resolve to continue working together as well as with the wider international community to augment the capacity of the United Nations to more effectively address the global development and security challenges. With the historic adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, and recognizing its universality, the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to implement this ambitious agenda domestically and internationally and work in a collaborative partnership for the effective achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

42) The leaders reaffirmed their support for a reformed UN Security Council with India as a permanent member. Both sides committed to ensuring that the Security Council continues to play an effective role in maintaining international peace and security as envisioned in the UN Charter. The leaders are committed to continued engagement on Security Council reform in the UN Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) on Security Council Reform.

43) The leaders welcomed the successful convening of the Leaders' Summit on UN Peacekeeping and committed to deepening engagement on UN peacekeeping capacity-building efforts in third countries, through co-organizing the first UN Peacekeeping Course for African Partners in New Delhi later this year for participants from ten countries in Africa. The leaders also reiterated their support for ongoing reform efforts to strengthen UN peacekeeping operations.

44) Building on their respective bilateral engagements with Africa, such as the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit and India-Africa Forum Summit, the leaders reflected that the United States and India share a common interest in working with partners in Africa to promote prosperity and security across the continent. The leaders welcomed trilateral cooperation with African partners, including in areas such as agriculture, health, energy, women's empowerment and sanitation under the Statement of Guiding Principles on Triangular Cooperation for Global Development. They looked forward to opportunities to deepen the U.S.-India global development cooperation in Africa, as well as in Asia and beyond.

Building People-to-People Ties

45) Both sides committed to open additional consulates in each other's country. India will be opening a new consulate in Seattle and the United States will open a new consulate at a mutually agreed location in India.

46) The leaders announced that the United States and India will be Travel and Tourism Partner Countries for 2017, and committed to facilitate visas for each other's nationals.

47) Reflecting on the strong educational and cultural bonds between the two countries, the leaders welcomed the growing number of Indian students studying in the United States, which increased by 29 percent to nearly 133,000 students in 2014–2015, and looked forward to increased opportunities for American students to study in India. The leaders also appreciated their governments' joint efforts through the Fulbright-Kalam Climate Fellowship to develop a cohort of climate scientists to confront the shared challenge of global climate change.

48) Recognizing its mutual goal of strengthening greater people-to-people ties, the leaders intend to renew efforts to intensify dialogue to address issues affecting the citizens of both countries that arise due to differences in the approaches of legal systems, including issues relating to cross-country marriage, divorce and child custody.

49) Prime Minister Modi welcomed the United States' repatriation of antiquities to India. The leaders also committed to redouble their efforts to combat the theft and trafficking of cultural objects.

50) Prime Minister Modi thanked President Obama for his gracious invitation and warmth of hospitality. He extended an invitation for President Obama to visit India at his convenience.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known as Daesh. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on the 70th Anniversary of the Accession to the Throne by King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand
June 7, 2016

On behalf of the American people, I send my heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej and the people of the Kingdom of Thailand as they celebrate the 70th anniversary of the King's accession to the throne. On this historic occasion, I want to express my admiration for His Majesty's leadership and his many contributions to deepening the enduring bonds between our peoples.

As I saw firsthand during my visit to Bangkok in 2012, His Majesty's leadership has helped our two countries promote peace and prosperity throughout the Asia-Pacific region. His Majesty has served as a source of strength and inspiration for many in our two countries over the past seven decades. As the only reigning monarch born in the United States, His Majesty shares a special connection with the American people. King Bhumibol Adulyadej Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts, his birthplace, serves as a testament to the close ties between our two countries.

We look forward to continuing to strengthen the relationship between the people of the U.S. and Thailand in order to further increase mutual prosperity and address regional and global challenges together.

Statement on the Death of Helen Fabela Chavez
June 7, 2016

For 88 years, Helen Chavez was a force of quiet strength, but she left a legacy that will echo for generations. Alongside her husband Cesar she devoted her life to organizing farmworkers in California and across America, fighting for higher wages, better working conditions, and a brighter future—La Causa. She managed her union's finances, prepared meals, marched in picket lines, and was even arrested for her actions, all because she believed in the dignity of America's farmworkers: men and women she toiled with in the fields, even as she raised eight children and helped lead a movement.

I had the great privilege to meet Helen when I designated the home that she and Cesar lived in for so long as the Cesar E. Chavez National Monument. Michelle and I send our condolences to her many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, including her granddaughter Julie Chavez Rodriguez, a trusted member of our White House team. And we join them all in celebration of a life well lived, a life that proves those who love their country can change it. *Sí se puede.*

NOTE: The statement referred to Sylvia Delgado, Eloise Carillo, Liz Villarino, Anna Ybarra, and Fernando, Paul, and Anthony Chavez, children of Ms. Chavez; and Deputy Director of Public Engagement Julie Chavez Rodriguez.

Eulogy at the Funeral Service for Former Deputy White House Counsel Cassandra Q. Butts
June 7, 2016

The President. Good evening.

Audience members. Good evening.

The President. We are here to celebrate the life of our dear friend Cassandra, a warrior for social justice, a warm and generous servant who devoted her life to bettering the lives of others, and an unbelievable friend.

I first met Cassandra in a place that tends to stoke one's passions for social and economic justice: the financial aid line at law school. [*Laughter*] We were just entering Harvard Law. We happened to be next to each other in line, I think it was in Pound Hall, and we were furiously filling out our financial aid forms. I have no doubt I was doing something wrong. She may have looked over my shoulder and said, "I think that's wrong." [*Laughter*] And we were inching forward each time the registrar shouted, "Next!" We introduced ourselves to each other, and we bonded over the fact that we were signing our lives away to Harvard, fully aware of how long it would take us to pay off that debt that we were about to accrue.

And then, we bonded over other things. We bonded over our love for jazz. We bonded over our fandom of Michael Jordan, because she was a Tar Heel and I was a Bull. We talked about our early beginnings in civic engagement, protesting apartheid, her at North Carolina and me at Occidental. And we talked about our interest in the law, why we were there: the notion that we might somehow take this knowledge that we were going to extract from this place an apply it to help those on society's margins to improve their circumstances.

I made a lot of great friends at Harvard. Some of them are here today, like Judge Wilkins, who was older and cooler than I was at the time and still is. [*Laughter*] I don't know about older, but maybe still cooler. But Cassandra I relied on. I relied on her for counsel and for encouragement. I have a confession to make: I still possess some albums of hers. [*Laughter*] I think there's a Miles Davis album, a John Coltrane album. I've been listening to some of that music since she passed. In my defense, she kept one of my constitutional law

books. [*Laughter*] But I think I got the better end of that trade. [*Laughter*]

And that was true generally with Cassandra. Those who knew her, I think, understood that somehow, we were getting the better end of that trade.

In law school, we'd sit around and dream about how we were going to take what we learned in those halls and we'd go change the world. And while we separated for a time after graduation—her coming to Washington, me heading back to Chicago—we stayed in touch. I kept up with her while she was working in Congress and at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. I talked to her about the work I was doing as a civil rights attorney and a professor, and I told her about Michelle and all the hopes and dreams that we had together. And in a lot of ways, she served as a moral compass for me. She was a constant, steady presence.

And when I arrived here in Washington after winning my Senate race, I was 99th in seniority. But I did have a secret weapon, and that was, I knew Cassandra. [*Laughter*] So I asked her for some advice, and she, of course, went farther than that, helping me to hire a smart, dedicated team, helping me to get a conversation going with Pete Rouse, who had been the chief of staff for Tom Daschle and who had no reason to want to deal with somebody who was 99th in seniority. But somehow, she persuaded him to take a meeting with me, and as a consequence, we were able to put together this remarkable team of people, many of whom still work with me today.

She helped me to plan what I might accomplish on behalf of the people of Illinois. And then, because I thought that she didn't have enough to do, I'd send her early chapters of a book I was writing at 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning just to see what she thought. And we'd try to have dinner at least once a month, just to keep each other grounded, mainly for her to keep me grounded, because she didn't need help on that front.

I didn't know then that I'd run for President just a few short years later. But when I did, I knew that I needed her help. She was one of my most valuable utility players. She was like a Swiss Army knife: Whatever you needed, you could find. Smart enough to do just about any project, thoughtful enough to help others step in, finding those who might add to our collective efforts.

She was essential in the first days of my administration. Working with Greg Craig and others, she helped to stock our Justice Department with bright, dedicated attorneys. She meticulously crafted our earliest policies so that all who work in the White House hold ourselves to the highest of ethical standards as keepers of the public trust.

In fact, my first Executive orders, which she helped design, reflected both of our views that public service is a privilege, that it's not about advancing yourself or your friends or your clients or your donors or some ideological agenda, it's about advancing the interests of every single American: the pay freeze for senior staff, which made us very popular; the toughest lobbying ban in history; an ethics briefing on what's required of all of us to make sure that we're putting the people's interests above our own, a briefing, by the way, that I was the first person to receive. Each of those policies bore her touch.

And later, as my Deputy Counsel, Cassandra helped to oversee a range of areas, among them the vetting and selection of judicial nominees. And she did that pretty good, because she got one of the finest judges to agree to undergo a difficult process and become an outstanding Supreme Court justice.

But her most lasting impact, at least in my administration, was just being who she was.

Every senior White House appointee in those first days—every single one—had to meet personally with Cassandra. Every single one. That's how much trust I had in her, in her integrity, in her judgment, in her feel for people. She was the person I trusted to ensure that everybody we hired understood the values of this administration and approached their jobs with the kind of professionalism and decency and integrity expected of anyone fortunate enough to serve their country at the highest level.

She knew I wanted the best and the brightest, people with the same kind of high-minded idealism that she and I had talked about late into the night all those years before in law school, what we had imagined might be possible: that politics and government could be different; that this country could be better; that justice could be served, that it wasn't a pipe dream, that it wasn't something in the past, that it was something that could actually be achieved.

What better person to impart that message than Cassandra. What better person to impart upon each of us the notion that there's something bigger than ourselves and that when you give to others and you serve others and you do right by others, that that's what fills you up, that's what makes your life count.

Cassandra was one of those rare people you never wanted to disappoint, not because she was judgmental; she, in fact, was infinitely patient and forgiving of people's foibles. And she used that big, wonderful, deep laugh of hers to make you feel like, yes, everybody is going to make mistakes and everybody is going to screw up. So it wasn't because she was judgmental, it was because you felt somehow that she knew your best self, the person you couldn't always claim to be, but the person you hoped to be. She saw that in you. And I know she made me better, and I believe she made us better.

And if you've spoken to anybody who knew her well over these past several days or any of the innumerable people that she took the time to mentor, you'll hear the same qualities that we were looking for in those early days of the administration applied to her in spades: professionalism, decency, integrity, insight, smarts, humor, and a fundamental kindness. She was a kind person. You know, it's interesting, as you get older, it turns out, kindness counts for a lot.

It's been brought to my attention that, in her final months, Cassandra was working on a passion project: not fine-tuning the sports cars she loved to drive—[*laughter*]—but rather, funding scholarships for underprivileged high school kids who want to go to college to study the arts. And that came as no surprise. That's the kind of thing she'd do.

As a society, we have an unfortunate tendency to celebrate the people we love only once they are gone. So it is a testament to Cassandra, to the life that she lived and shared with us, that so many people celebrated her while she was still here. I do wish I had seen her more this past year. I know she would forgive me and smile and comfort me and tell me not to feel too guilty. Because that's who she was.

And I'd like to close my remarks on that note, by paraphrasing something that's stayed with me from a piece I read about her last week. It concluded by saying that Cassandra is survived by her mother, who lives in North Carolina; by her father, who lives in New York; by her sister, her brother-in-law, and her nephews, who she was so proud of, who live in Maryland; and her friends, who live everywhere. Her friends who live everywhere. How true that is.

She was my friend. She was as true a person as I ever met. I loved her dearly, and I will miss her badly.

We pray that the Lord grants our sister, Cassandra, eternal peace. May He bless her memory. May He bless her family and the lives of everyone that she touched.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:11 p.m. at Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church. In his remarks, he referred to Michael Jordan, former guard, National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls; Robert L. Wilkins, judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit; former Counselor to the President and Interim White House Chief of Staff Peter M. Rouse; former Sen. Thomas A. Daschle; former White House Counsel Gregory B. Craig; Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia M. Sotomayor; and Mae A. Karim, mother, Charles N. Butts, father, Deidra Abbott, sister, Frank Abbott, brother-in-law, and Alston and Ethan Abbott, nephews, of Ms. Butts. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval Legislation Regarding Congressional Disapproval of the Department of Labor's Final Conflict of Interest Rule
June 8, 2016

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.J. Res. 88, a resolution that would nullify the Department of Labor's final conflict of interest rule. This rule is critical to protecting Americans' hard-earned savings and preserving their retirement security.

The outdated regulations in place before this rulemaking did not ensure that financial advisers act in their clients' best interests when giving retirement investment advice. Instead, some firms have incentivized advisers to steer clients into products that have higher fees and lower returns—costing America's families an estimated $17 billion a year.

The Department of Labor's final rule will ensure that American workers and retirees receive retirement advice that is in their best interest, better enabling them to protect and grow their savings. The final rule reflects extensive feedback from industry, advocates, and Members of Congress, and has been streamlined to reduce the compliance burden and ensure continued access to advice, while maintaining an enforceable best interest standard that protects consumers. It is essential that these critical protections go into effect. Because this resolution seeks to block the progress represented by this rule and deny retirement savers investment advice in their best interest, I cannot support it. I am therefore vetoing this resolution.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 8, 2016.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in New York City
June 8, 2016

First of all, I know that was much better than Ken would have done. [*Laughter*] So I want to thank Ken and Katherine and their amazing family for opening up this great space. It is wonderful to see all of you.

A couple other people I want to acknowledge. First of all, the DNC finance chair, Henry Muñoz. Where is he? He's back here somewhere. There's Henry. Henry has a pretty thankless job, but he does it with good humor and grace, and so we're really appreciative of him.

And you have an outstanding Member of Congress here who is on the right side of issues, is smart, is tough, but most importantly, is courageous and is willing to stand up for what he thinks is right even when it's hard, whether it's voting against the Iraq war when that was a really hard thing to do, to supporting us getting nuclear weapons out of Iran without firing a shot, which was also a hard thing to do. So I just want everybody to please show some appreciation for Jerry Nadler.

So this has been an interesting election season. [*Laughter*] Not exactly what we expected. And yet I am both incredibly encouraged and concerned and determined. I'm incredibly encouraged because after having been President for 7½ years under as tough a set of circumstances as we've seen in recent memory—the worst financial crisis in our lifetimes, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, challenges from terrorism, the growing menace of climate change—despite all those things, I have seen the American people respond and seen the resilience and the basic decency and goodness of this country in all kinds of ways, in all parts of the country.

I do a lot of commencements around this time of year—which I love doing, although my older daughter is graduating this week and I

will not be able to handle that well. [*Laughter*] But when it's other kids graduating, I feel joyful and I'm happy. And one of the things that I've said to the young people that I met is that despite the cynicism and the bad news and the discouragement and the rancor that they're seeing on television, or these days on their phones every day, if you had to be born at one moment in human history and you didn't know ahead of time who you were going to be or whether you were going to be rich or poor, Black or White, what nationality, you would choose now, this moment, because the world is actually healthier, better educated, less violent, more tolerant than probably any time in human history.

I said, if you were to choose a moment in American history in which to be born, you'd choose now. Because if you think about—I was mentioning the passing of Muhammad Ali, who basically had his first fight when I was born, won the Gold Medal for our country and came back and could not eat at a restaurant in his own hometown and ended up throwing that Gold Medal into the river, and then this week you saw somebody who was probably the biggest icon in the world and one of the most beloved, who was eulogized by an African American President. You'd choose now, not 50 years ago or 70 years ago or 30 years ago.

So there's cause for optimism because America is resilient and it's tough and it's full of good people. And I travel around the world, and the world still—even when it's a little begrudging—they still look to us to help lead and to help shape a better future for our kids. That's the good news. The bad news is that our politics has been a little screwed up lately. And we're seeing it now most prominently in the Republican nomination process and some of the interesting exchanges we've been seeing within the Republican Party, set aside between Democrats and Republicans. And I know that that's got a lot of people worried and it's got a lot of people discouraged.

But what I'm here to tell you is that if we do our jobs, then this country is going to be fine. If we do what we have to do, then the majority of the American people are going to want a country in which every child gets opportunity. And the majority of Americans are going to want a country where we're taking care of the environment and passing on a sustainable planet to future generations. And the majority of people want to continue the incredible vigor and energy that's brought about by immigration in this country, as long as it's lawful. And the majority of people are going to want to make sure that every talented kid in this country can go to college and not be burdened by mountains of debt.

The majority of American people are going to want to invest in science and research to cure diseases and to make sure that our economy stays vibrant and innovative. And the majority of people believe in things like science and scientists. [*Laughter*] And so when scientists tell us that the planet is getting warmer and we need to do something about it, the majority of people think that's a good idea, let's do something about that, because we don't want Manhattan to be under water.

And so the question is, how do we make sure we do our jobs. Now, we just ended—or sort of ended—our primary season. And I'm going to be meeting with Senator Sanders tomorrow. I've had conversations with both him and Hillary Clinton. And the good news is, is that although primary seasons are always tough—your supporters and staff, they start saying things, and somebody reads it, and you start getting irritated—and so you get a little bruised feelings. When you look at the issues, there's a pretty broad consensus about what it means to be a Democrat and what our values are and what we're fighting for.

And so I'm not too worried about us being able to come together. I am concerned about us doing the hard nuts-and-bolts work of turning out people to vote, particularly young people, particularly low-income people who oftentimes feel forgotten and are still stressed and are still pressed. And in order for us to reach them, we're going to have to do some work. We're going to have to organize. We're going to have to do what I did in 2008 and what we did in 2012, and that is fan out and go door to door and listen, as well as talk about the issues

that are at stake. We're going to have to draw sharp contrasts, but we're also going to have to model the fact that it's possible to be passionate and full of conviction and not be mean or think that there's no possibility for a compromise. We've got to get busy, and we've got to organize, and we've got to work.

And the only way we do that effectively is when we have support from folks like you. Because I met one young woman who said she had worked for me as a fellow, and so is responsible for me being here as President. [*Laughter*] Although I am—well, I am reminded of the story about Abraham Lincoln, where back in the day you had office hours if you were President, because people didn't have phones or Twitter or what not, so if they wanted to petition your Government they'd show up in Washington. And this guy comes to see Lincoln. He says—I think he wanted a postmaster job or something—he said, sir, I work tirelessly to deliver such and such county on your behalf, and I'm the reason you're President. And Lincoln looked up, and he says, sir, I forgive you—[*laughter*]—what can I do for you? [*Laughter*]

But the reason I'm here is because young people like this worked and were inspired, but more importantly, they inspired others. They inspired me. And those young people are still out there, but we've got to reach them. And we've got to give them the tools they need to help make this grand experiment in self-government work.

So I just want everybody to really feel a conviction that this will be fine as long as we do our jobs. But it's not a given. A democracy is not self-executing. It requires us to invest in it continually and nurture it and work it, and take responsibility for it. And I can't think of a clearer moment in my lifetime where that is necessary. And I like a situation where it's in our control. I like those moments where if I do what I'm supposed to do, I can get a good outcome. And you should feel that as well. But understand it's not going to be automatic, and make sure that all of you feel the same kind of energy and passion that helped to get me elected in 2008 and 2012. And in the meantime, we've got to get our Senate back and get a Supreme Court Justice. This is going to be fun. [*Laughter*]

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:57 p.m. at the residence of Kenneth Lerer and Katherine Sailer. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Bernard Sanders and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in their capacity as Democratic Presidential candidates. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Lunch With White House Mentorship and Leadership Program Participants

June 9, 2016

Well, as many of you know, one of the biggest focal points for both me and Michelle during the course of our Presidency is how can we tap into the incredible talents of young people all across the country. And for Michelle, she's been doing a lot of work with a program called "Let Girls Learn" that's not just domestic, but international. She's had a consistent group of young women who she mentors herself.

For us, what we've been trying to do is to really broaden the network of support that our young men have all across the country. And that's been true for this program, "My Brother's Keeper." And I couldn't be prouder of the work that we've been able to do. In hundreds of cities across the country, we are seeing thousands of mentors step up. We are seeing organizations like the NBA and major corporations who are providing opportunities for young people to see what their opportunities are. We're linking them up with universities so that they know that they can aspire not just to go to college, but to complete college. And we're going to not just keep doing this until the end of

my Presidency, but this is something that Michelle and I are very interested in doing after the Presidency is over.

One of my favorite things about this, though, is that I actually have a group of White House mentees, and these outstanding young men who you see, who are looking very sharp today—[*laughter*]—have been participating in the program. Some of them have actually been with us for a couple of years now. They started as juniors; they're now seniors. We have sitting around the table young people who despite, in some cases, some pretty tough circumstances—growing up with single parents, growing up in pretty tough neighborhoods—we've got young people who are going to be going to Stanford University. We've got people who are going to Yale. We've got folks who are going to Morehouse. We've got young people who are going to be joining our Armed Forces. We have folks who are going to be engineers and doctors and are pursuing just a wide range of interests.

And I've gotten to know them over the last couple of years, and I could not be prouder of them. And it's a testimony to how much talent there is out there, as long as young people get a chance. And it doesn't take much. It just requires us really exposing them to what's possible and giving them some resources and some open doors. And they'll run through them.

And I just want to, in front of them and in front of the press, say how incredibly proud I am of all them and what they're going to accomplish. And I want to thank members of my administration, because the way the White House Mentorship Program works, they don't just meet with me; more importantly, they're assigned mentors like a Jeh Johnson, my Secretary of Homeland Security, or Broderick Johnson, who's one of my—not just my Cabinet Secretary, but one of my chief advisers and closest friends. And so we've—Secretary King, Department of Education. They are active in this process as well, and they're real busy, but I think they would agree that this has been one of the more satisfying things that they have done.

So I'm proud of the young men, and I want to encourage—and I'm going to keep on talking about this—adults out there, particularly men out there, to—if you are interested in mentoring and signing up, get on the White House website and look up "My Brother's Keeper," and we will get you signed up and get something rolling in your city or your community so you can be inspired by the incredible young people in your community, just like I am by these fine young men.

All right? Thanks, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Remarks at a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month Reception
June 9, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello, hello, hello! Good to see you. Hello! Well, welcome to the White House. Let me first of all——

Audience member. Love you, Mr. President!

The President. [*Laughter*] Let me acknowledge some outstanding public servants who are here. We've got Secretary of the Army, Eric Fanning is in the house. Export-Import Bank Chairman Fred Hochberg is here. We've got some amazing Members of Congress—no one who has done more on behalf of justice and equality than former Speaker and, perhaps soon to be Speaker again, Nancy Pelosi. [*Applause*] We love Nancy.

So this is the eighth Pride reception that we will celebrate together. I want to begin by saying thank you to all the people that—I'm looking out in the audience; I see some new friends, but a lot of old friends, folks who have been with us through thick and thin. And I am grateful for all that you've done to work with us to accomplish some amazing transformations over these last 7½ years.

So every year, we set aside this month to celebrate the ways that so many lesbian, gay,

bisexual, and transgender Americans have helped to make our Union just a little more perfect. We honor the countless nameless heroes who paved the way for progress: the activists who marched; the advocates who organized; the lawyers who argued cases; the families who stood by their loved ones, even when it was tough; every brave American who came out and spoke out, especially when it was tough. Because of them, because of all of you, there's a lot to be proud of today.

Today, we live in an America where "don't ask, don't tell" don't exist no more. Because no one should have to hide who they love in order to serve the country that they love. We live in an America that protects all of us with a hate crimes law that bears the name of Matthew Shepard. We live in an America where all of us are treated more equally, because visiting hours in hospitals no longer depend on who you are and insurance companies can no longer turn somebody away simply because of who you love.

Thanks to heroes like Edith Windsor and Jim Ober—I always get Jim's name—[*laughter*]—Jim knows I love him, but I never know where to put the emphasis—Obergefell—generations of couples who insisted that love is love, we now live in an America where all of our marriages and our families are recognized as equal under the law. And that's an extraordinary thing. When you talk to the upcoming generation, our kids—Malia's, Sasha's generation—they instinctively know people are people and families are families. And discrimination, it's so last century. [*Laughter*] It's so passé. It doesn't make sense to them. So we live in an America where the laws are finally catching up to the hearts of kids and what they instinctively understand.

So some folks never imagined we'd come this far, maybe even some in this room. Change can be slow. And I know that there have been times where at least some of the people in this room have yelled at me. [*Laughter*] But together, we've proven that change is possible, that progress is possible.

It's not inevitable though. History doesn't just travel forward, it can go backwards if we don't work hard. So we can't be complacent. [*Applause*] We cannot be complacent. Securing the gains this country has made requires perseverance and vigilance. And it requires voting. Because we've got more work to do.

We still have more work to do when gay and bisexual men make up two-thirds of new HIV cases in our country. We have to work hard to make sure that jobs are not being denied, people aren't being fired because of their sexual orientation. We still have work to do when transgender persons are attacked, even killed for just being who they are. We've got work to do when LGBT people around the world still face incredible isolation and poverty and persecution and violence and even death. We have work to make sure that every single child, no matter who they are or where they come from or what they look like or how they live, feels welcomed and valued and loved.

So we're going to have to keep on pushing. And that's the work of all of us. The great and often unsung civil rights hero Bayard Rustin once said, "We need in every community a group of angelic troublemakers." [*Laughter*] I like that.

And that's what I see here tonight, people who aren't afraid to ruffle feathers in the name of justice and equality until we extend the full promise of America to every single one of us. And that's always been our story, not just in Selma or Seneca Falls, but in Compton's Café and the Stonewall Inn. It's the story of brave Americans who were willing to risk everything, not just their own liberty or dignity, but also doing it on behalf of the dignity and liberty of generations to come. They understood a truth that lies at the heart of this Nation: When all Americans are treated equal, we're all more free.

And that's what should give us hope. Despite our differences and our divisions and the many complicated issues that we grapple with, real change is possible. Minds open. Hearts change. America shifts. And if the past few years have taught us anything, it's that people who love their country can change it.

One of the most special moments of my Presidency was that warm summer night last

June when we lit up the White House like a rainbow. It was a powerful symbol here at home, where more Americans finally felt accepted and whole and that their country recognized the love that they felt. It was a beacon for people around the world who are still fighting for those rights. It was a reminder that when the change we seek comes, and when we move a little bit further on our journey toward equality and justice, we still have a responsibility to reach back and help pull up others who are striving to do the same.

So enjoy tonight. Have some champagne; some of you already have, I can tell. [*Laughter*] Tomorrow we get back to work. And by the way, we get back to work not just fighting on behalf of justice and equality for the LGBT community, but for everybody. Because one of the—if you've felt the sting of discrimination, then you don't just fight to end discrimination for yourself, you've got to fight for the poor kid who needs opportunity. You need to fight for the working mom who can't pay the bills. You've got to fight for some young woman on the other side of the world who can't get an education. It can't just be about us. It's about "we" and what we can do together.

So I'm very proud—very proud to have fought alongside you. We've got more miles in the journey, and I'm so glad that we're going to be traveling that road together.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:11 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Edith Windsor, plaintiff in the U.S. Supreme Court case *United States* v. *Windsor*, and James Obergefell, plaintiff in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Obergefell* v. *Hodges*, which ruled in favor of marriage equality for same-sex couples.

Statement on the Death of Gordie Howe
June 10, 2016

The list of hockey players who suited up in six different decades, including returning to the ice after being inducted into the Hall of Fame, is a short one: it starts and ends with Gordie Howe. But the list of kids who skated around the pond until dark, picturing themselves passing, scoring, and enforcing like Howe, dreaming of hoisting the Stanley Cup like him—that one comprises too many to count. Howe's productivity, perseverance, and humility personified his adopted hometown of Detroit, to which he brought four championships and which he represented as an All-Star more than 20 times. The greatest players define their game for a generation; over more than half a century on the ice, Mr. Hockey defined it for a lifetime. Michelle and I send our condolences to his sons and daughter, his family, and his loyal fans from Hockeytown to Hartford to Houston and across North America.

NOTE: The statement referred to Mark and Marty Howe, sons, and Cathy Purnell, daughter, of Mr. Howe.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions and Policies of Certain Members of the Government of Belarus and Other Persons To Undermine Belarus's Democratic Processes or Institutions
June 10, 2016

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary

date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine Belarus's democratic processes or institutions that was declared in Executive Order 13405 of June 16, 2006, is to continue in effect beyond June 16, 2016.

The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine Belarus's democratic processes or institutions, to commit human rights abuses related to political repression, and to engage in public corruption continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13405 with respect to Belarus.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 10, 2016.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address
June 11, 2016

Hi, everybody. Today I want to talk with you about the crisis in Puerto Rico and why it matters to all of us. Puerto Ricans are American citizens, just like folks in Maine or Oklahoma or New Mexico. And over the last decade, Puerto Rico has suffered through a deep and painful recession, but unlike the rest of the United States, it hasn't recovered.

Today, the island continues to face a crippling economic crisis. Schools are closing. Power is being cut off at homes and hospitals. Teachers have to choose between turning on the lights or turning on the computers. Doctors can't get medicine to treat newborns unless they pay in cash. And as the Zika virus threatens both the island and the mainland, workers dealing with mosquito control to help protect women and their unborn babies are at risk of being laid off.

Right now Puerto Rico is spending about a third of its tax revenue on debt payments, far more than anywhere else in America. And on July 1, the island faces another $2 billion in debt payments that it cannot pay.

There is only one way for Puerto Rico to pull itself out of this crisis, and that's by restructuring its debt and finding a sustainable fiscal path toward growth and opportunity for its people. But here's the problem. Right now Puerto Rico doesn't have the tools it needs to restructure its debt, tools available elsewhere in America. And only Congress can fix the problem and put Puerto Rico on a path to recovery.

Thankfully, this week, the House overwhelmingly passed a bipartisan bill to address the crisis, and I now urge the Senate to move quickly to follow suit. This bill won't cost Federal taxpayers a dime. It doesn't include special interest bailouts. And it gives Puerto Rico the ability to restructure its debt, safeguard essential services, and provide important protections to public pensions that more than 300,000 folks rely on to retire with dignity.

This bill also includes something else: a temporary system of oversight to help implement needed reforms and ensure transparency. I know that some folks in Puerto Rico are worried about this kind of oversight. But I've always insisted that any solution to this crisis has to respect the democratic rights of the people of Puerto Rico. And I'm committed to making sure that Puerto Ricans are well represented in this process so that we can be sure we're taking steps that are in the island's best interests.

This bill is not a perfect solution; nobody's saying it is. That's what happens in divided government. But it's the only option on the table to save Puerto Rico from spiraling out of control. And that's exactly what would happen if Congress fails to do its job.

There's no question this is a trying time for folks in Puerto Rico. They've seen too many jobs lost and too many neighbors leave in search of better opportunity elsewhere. It's clear that it's time for Puerto Rico to chart a new course and make a fresh start. This bill is just a first step.

We all have more work to do to make sure that the people of Puerto Rico receive the health care they deserve and the good jobs and economic opportunities they need to build a better future for their kids. And I want the people of Puerto Rico to know that my administration is committed to your success, because you're vital to America's success.

That's what this is all about. We don't turn our backs on our fellow Americans. We don't treat folks differently because of where they live. Instead, we treat each other as Americans. We come together, especially when it's hard. That's how we've always set ourselves on a course toward a brighter day.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:15 p.m. on June 10 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on June 11. In the address, the President referred to S. 2328. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 10, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 11. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on the Shooting in Orlando, Florida
June 12, 2016

Today, as Americans, we grieve the brutal murder—a horrific massacre—of dozens of innocent people. We pray for their families, who are grasping for answers with broken hearts. We stand with the people of Orlando, who have endured a terrible attack on their city. Although it's still early in the investigation, we know enough to say that this was an act of terror and an act of hate. And as Americans, we are united in grief, in outrage, and in resolve to defend our people.

I just finished a meeting with FBI Director Comey and my homeland security and national security advisers. The FBI is on the scene and leading the investigation, in partnership with local law enforcement. I've directed that the full resources of the Federal Government be made available for this investigation.

We are still learning all the facts. This is an open investigation. We've reached no definitive judgment on the precise motivations of the killer. The FBI is appropriately investigating this as an act of terrorism. And I've directed that we must spare no effort to determine what—if any—inspiration or association this killer may have had with terrorist groups. What is clear is that he was a person filled with hatred. Over the coming days, we will uncover why and how this happened, and we will go wherever the facts lead us.

This morning I spoke with my good friend, Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer, and I conveyed to him the deepest condolences of the American people. This could have been any one of our communities. So I told Mayor Dyer that whatever help he and the people of Orlando need, they are going to get it. As a country, we will be there for the people of Orlando today, tomorrow, and for all the days to come.

We also express our profound gratitude to all the police and first responders who rushed to harm's way. Their courage and professionalism saved lives, and kept the carnage from being even worse. It's the kind of sacrifice that our law enforcement professionals make every single day for all of us, and we can never thank them enough.

This is an especially heartbreaking day for all our friends—our fellow Americans—who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. The shooter targeted a nightclub where people came together to be with friends, to dance and to sing, and to live. The place where they were attacked is more than a nightclub; it is a place of solidarity and empowerment where people have come together to raise awareness, to speak their minds, and to advocate for their civil rights.

So this is a sobering reminder that attacks on any American—regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation—is an attack on all of us and on the fundamental values of equality and dignity that define us as a country. And no act of hate or terror will ever change who we are or the values that make us Americans.

Today marks the most deadly shooting in American history. The shooter was apparently armed with a handgun and a powerful assault rifle. This massacre is therefore a further reminder of how easy it is for someone to get their hands on a weapon that lets them shoot people in a school or in a house of worship or a movie theater or in a nightclub. And we have to decide if that's the kind of country we want to be. And to actively do nothing is a decision as well.

In the coming hours and days, we'll learn about the victims of this tragedy: their names, their faces, who they were, the joy that they brought to families and to friends, and the difference that they made in this world. Say a prayer for them, and say a prayer for their families: that God give them the strength to bear the unbearable; and that He give us all the strength to be there for them and the strength and courage to change. We need to demonstrate that we are defined more—as a country—by the way they lived their lives than by the hate of the man who took them from us.

As we go together, we will draw inspiration from heroic and selfless acts: friends who helped friends, took care of each other, and saved lives. In the face of hate and violence, we will love one another. We will not give in to fear or turn against each other. Instead, we will stand united, as Americans, to protect our people, and defend our Nation, and to take action against those who threaten us.

May God bless the Americans we lost this morning, may He comfort their families, and may God continue to watch over this country that we love. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:59 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Omar Mateen, suspected gunman in the terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, FL. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. The related proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Briefing on the Terrorist Attack in Orlando, Florida, and an Exchange With Reporters
June 13, 2016

The President. I just had the opportunity to get the latest briefing from FBI Director Comey, as well as Deputy Attorney General Yates and the rest of my national security team, about the tragedy that took place in Orlando. They're going to be doing a more extensive briefing around noon, just a little bit after noon, over at FBI headquarters. So I will allow them to go into all the details, but I thought it was important for you to hear directly from me.

First of all, our hearts go out to the families of those who have been killed. Our prayers go to those who have been wounded. This is a devastating attack on all Americans. It is one that is particularly painful for the people of Orlando, but I think we all recognize that this could have happened anywhere in this country.

And we feel enormous solidarity and grief on behalf of the families that have been affected.

The fact that it took place at a club frequented by the LGBT community, I think, is also relevant. We're still looking at all the motivations of the killer. But it's a reminder that regardless of race, religion, faith, or sexual orientation, we're all Americans, and we need to be looking after each other and protecting each other at all times in the face of this kind of terrible act.

With respect to the killer, there's been a lot of reporting that's been done. It's important to emphasize that we're still at the preliminary stages of the investigation, and there's a lot more that we have to learn. The one thing that we can say is that this is being treated as a terrorist investigation. It appears that the shooter was inspired by various extremist information that was disseminated over the Internet. All those materials are currently being searched, exploited so we will have a better sense of the pathway that the killer took in making a decision to launch this attack.

As Director Comey, I think, will indicate, at this stage, we see no clear evidence that he was directed externally. It does appear that, at the last minute, he announced allegiance to ISIL, but there is no evidence so far that he was in fact directed by ISIL. And there also at this stage is no direct evidence that he was part of a larger plot. In that sense, it is—appears to be similar to what we saw in San Bernardino, but we don't yet know. And this is part of what is going to be important in terms of the investigation.

As far as we can tell right now, this is certainly an example of the kind of homegrown extremism that all of us have been so concerned about for a very long time. It also appears that he was able to obtain these weapons legally because he did not have a criminal record that, in some ways, would prohibit him from purchasing these weapons. It appears that one of those weapons he was able to just carry out of the store—an assault rifle, a handgun—a Glock—which had a lot of clips in it. He was apparently required to wait for 3 days under Florida law. But it does indicate the degree to which it was not difficult for him to obtain these kinds of weapons.

Director Comey will discuss the fact that there had been some investigation of him in the past that was triggered, but as Director Comey, I think, will indicate, the FBI followed the procedures that they were supposed to and did a proper job.

At the end of the day, this is something that we are going to have to grapple with—making sure that even as we go after ISIL and other extremist organizations overseas, even as we hit their leadership, even as we go after their infrastructure, even as we take key personnel off the field, even as we disrupt external plots—that one of the biggest challenges we are going to have is this kind of propaganda and perversions of Islam that you see generated on the Internet and the capacity for that to seep into the minds of troubled individuals or weak individuals and seeing them motivated then to take actions against people here in the United States and elsewhere in the world that are tragic. And so countering this extremist ideology is increasingly going to be just as important as making sure that we are disrupting more extensive plots engineered from the outside.

We are also going to have to have to make sure that we think about the risks we are willing to take by being so lax in how we make very powerful firearms available to people in this country. And this is something that obviously I've talked about for a very long time.

My concern is that we start getting into a debate, as has happened in the past, which is an either-or debate. And the suggestion is, either we think about something as terrorism and we ignore the problems with easy access to firearms, or it's all about firearms and we ignore the role—the very real role that that organizations like ISIL have in generating extremist views inside this country. And it's not an either-or, it's a both-and.

We have to go after these terrorist organizations and hit them hard. We have to counter extremism. But we also have to make sure that it is not easy for somebody who decides they

want to harm people in this country to be able to obtain weapons to get at them.

And my hope is, is that over the next days and weeks that we are being sober about how we approach this problem, that we let the facts get determined by our investigators, but we also do some reflecting in terms of how we can best tackle what is going to be a very challenging problem not just here in this country, but around the world.

Again, my final point is just to extend our deepest sympathies to the families of those who were affected and to send our prayers to those who are surviving and are in hospitals right now, with their family members hoping that they get better very soon.

But in the meantime, you can anticipate sometime around noon that Director Comey and Deputy Attorney General Yates will provide you with a more full briefing about this. Okay?

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization/Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People

Q. Mr. President, is there anything more on the LBGT angle to this?

The President. Well, I think we don't yet know the motivations. But here's what we do know, is, organizations like ISIL or organizations like Al Qaida or those who have perverted Islam and created these radical, nihilistic, vicious organizations, one of the groups that they target are gays and lesbians, because they believe that they do not abide by their attitudes towards sexuality.

Now, we also know these are organizations that think it's fine to take captive women and enslave them and rape them. So there clearly are connections between the attitudes of an organization like this and their attitudes towards tolerance and pluralism and a belief that all people are treated equally regardless of sexual orientation. That is something threatening to them. Women being empowered is threatening to them.

So yes, I'm sure they're going to—we will find that there are connections—regardless of the particular motivations of this killer—there are connections between this vicious, bankrupt ideology and general attitudes towards gays and lesbians. And unfortunately, that's something that the LGBT community is subject to not just by ISIL, but by a lot of groups that purport to speak on behalf of God around the world.

Gun Control

Q. What are your thoughts about the fact that after all of these incidents over these years, that there has not been any move to reform gun control in this country?

The President. April [April Ryan, American Urban Radio Networks], I think you know what I think about it. The fact that we make it this challenging for law enforcement, for example, even to get alerted that somebody who they are watching has purchased a gun—and if they do get alerted, sometimes, it's hard for them to stop them from getting a gun—is crazy. It's a problem. And we have to, I think, do some soul searching.

But again, the danger here is, is that then it ends up being the usual political debate. And the NRA and the gun control folks say that, oh, Obama doesn't want to talk about terrorism. And if you talk about terrorism, then people say, why aren't you looking at issues of gun control?

The point is, is that if we have self-radicalized individuals in this country, then they are going to be very difficult oftentimes to find ahead of time. And how easy it is for them to obtain weapons is, in some cases, going to make a difference as to whether they're able to carry out attacks like this or not. And we make it very easy for individuals who are troubled or disturbed or want to engage in violent acts to get very powerful weapons very quickly. And that's a problem.

It's a problem regardless of their motivations. It's a problem for a young man who can walk into a church in South Carolina and murder nine people who offered to pray with him. It's a problem when an angry young man on a college campus decides to shoot people because he feels disrespected. So it's certainly a problem when we have organizations like ISIL

or Al Qaida who are actively trying to promote violence and are doing so very effectively over the Internet, because we know that at some point there are going to be, out of 300 million, there are going to be some individuals who find for whatever reason that kind of horrible propaganda enticing. And if that happens, and that person can get a weapon, that's a problem. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:13 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Omar Mateen, suspected gunman in the terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, FL, on June 12; and Dylann S. Roof, accused gunman in the shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC, on June 17, 2015.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Global Deployment of United States Combat-Equipped Armed Forces
June 13, 2016

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am providing this supplemental consolidated report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148), as part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed about deployments of U.S. Armed Forces equipped for combat.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM OBJECTIVES

In furtherance of U.S. counterterrorism efforts, the United States continues to work with partners around the globe, with a particular focus on the U.S. Central Command's and U.S. Africa Command's areas of responsibility. In this context, the United States has deployed U.S. combat-equipped forces to enhance the counterterrorism capabilities and support the counterterrorism operations of our partners and allies. Specific information about counterterrorism deployments to select countries is provided below, and a classified annex to this report provides further information.

Military Operations Against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and Associated Forces and in Support of Related U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives

Since October 7, 2001, U.S. Armed Forces, including special operations forces, have conducted counterterrorism combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces. Since August 2014, these operations have targeted the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which was formerly known as al-Qa'ida in Iraq. In support of these and other overseas operations, the United States has deployed combat-equipped forces to a number of locations in the U.S. Central, Pacific, European, Southern, and Africa Command areas of operation. Such operations and deployments have been reported previously, consistent with Public Law 107–40 and the War Powers Resolution, and operations and deployments remain ongoing. These operations, which the United States has carried out with the assistance of numerous international partners, have been successful in seriously degrading al-Qa'ida's and ISIL's capabilities and brought an end to the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan. These operations also included an airstrike conducted by U.S. forces on May 21, 2016, against Taliban leader Mullah Mansur in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. If necessary, in response to terrorist threats, I will direct additional measures to protect U.S. citizens and interests. It is not possible to know at this time the precise scope or the duration of the deployments of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter terrorist threats to the United States.

Afghanistan. As I previously announced, U.S. Armed Forces have transitioned the lead for security to Afghan security forces while striking significant blows against al-Qa'ida's leadership and preventing Afghanistan from

being used to launch attacks against the United States. A limited number of U.S. forces remain in Afghanistan for the purposes of training, advising, and assisting Afghan forces, conducting and supporting counterterrorism operations against the remnants of al-Qa'ida, and taking appropriate measures against those who directly threaten U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan or provide direct support to al-Qa'ida. The United States currently remains in an armed conflict against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces, and active hostilities against those groups remain ongoing.

The mission to help train, advise, and assist the Afghan National Security Forces and Afghan ministries and institutions continues through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization-led Resolute Support Mission. The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2189, dated December 12, 2014, which welcomed the Resolute Support Mission and underscored the importance of continued international support for the stability of Afghanistan.

Today, there are approximately 9,300 U.S. forces in Afghanistan, consistent with the Force Management Level of 9,800. (The actual number of U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan may exceed this Force Management Level due to, for example, overlap during rotations of units, and the continued presence of forces with the single mission of supporting the retrograde of U.S. equipment, both of which are excluded from the Force Management Level.)

Iraq and Syria. As part of a comprehensive strategy to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL, U.S. Armed Forces are conducting a systematic campaign of airstrikes and other necessary actions against ISIL forces in Iraq and Syria. United States Armed Forces are also conducting airstrikes in Syria against operatives of al-Qa'ida, including those who are involved in al-Qa'ida's plotting against the West. In Iraq, U.S. Armed Forces are advising and coordinating with Iraqi forces and providing training, equipment, communications support, intelligence support, and other support to select elements of the Iraqi security forces, including Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces. In February 2016, U.S. Armed Forces captured Sulayman Dawud al-Bakkar, also known as Abu Dawud, an ISIL "emir" of its chemical and conventional weapons manufacturing, in Iraq. On March 10, 2016, Dawud was transferred to Iraqi government custody. United States Armed Forces remain postured to support or conduct further similar operations in Iraq and Syria. Additionally, small teams of U.S. special operations forces have deployed to northern Syria to help coordinate U.S. operations with indigenous ground forces conducting operations against ISIL. The Force Management Level for U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq currently is 4,087. The Force Management Level for U.S. Armed Forces in Syria is 300.

These actions are being undertaken in coordination with and at the request of the Government of Iraq and in conjunction with coalition partners.

Turkey. In July 2015, the Government of Turkey agreed to the U.S. request to deploy U.S. combat aircraft to Turkey to conduct air operations in support of counter-ISIL operations. Strike and combat support aircraft, with associated U.S. military personnel, deployed to Turkey to support counter-ISIL operations and Turkish air sovereignty operations at the Turkish government's request.

Somalia. In Somalia, U.S. forces continue to counter the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida and associated elements of al-Shabaab and to provide advice and assistance to regional counterterrorism forces, including Somali National Army and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces. On March 31, 2016, U.S. forces conducted an airstrike against an al-Shabaab senior leader, Hassan Ali Dhoore, who is part of al-Qa'ida. On May 27, 2016, U.S. forces carried out an airstrike against Abdullahi Haji Da'ud, one of al-Shabaab's most senior commanders, who is also part of al-Qa'ida and served as the principal coordinator of al-Shabaab's attacks in Somalia and Kenya. United States forces also conducted strikes in defense of U.S. forces, and in defense of partnered Somali and AMISOM forces between March 5 and May 13, 2016, notably including the March 5 airstrike against an al-Shabaab

training facility where fighters posed an imminent threat to U.S. and AMISOM forces.

Yemen. The U.S. military has also been working closely with the Government of Yemen to operationally dismantle and ultimately eliminate the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the most active and dangerous affiliate of al-Qa'ida today. Our joint efforts have resulted in direct action against a limited number of AQAP operatives and senior leaders in that country who posed a terrorist threat to the United States and our interests. United States forces have conducted a number of airstrikes against AQAP combatants in Yemen since December 2015, including on February 3, February 29, March 30, April 23–28, and May 19. Notably, on March 22, 2016, U.S. forces conducted an airstrike targeting an AQAP training camp in Yemen. In April 2016, small numbers of U.S. military personnel were authorized to deploy to Yemen to support operations against AQAP.

Djibouti. United States forces continue to partner with Government of Djibouti authorities, which have permitted use of Djiboutian territory for basing of U.S. forces. United States forces remain deployed to Djibouti, including for purposes of posturing for counterterrorism operations in the Horn of Africa and Arabian Peninsula.

Libya. On February 19, 2016, U.S. forces conducted an airstrike targeting an ISIL training camp near Sabratha, Libya, and a senior ISIL facilitator, Noureddine Chouchane, also known as Sabir.

Cuba. Combat-equipped forces, deployed since January 2002 to the Naval Base, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, continue to conduct humane and secure detention operations for detainees held at Guantánamo Bay under the authority provided by the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (Public Law 107–40), as informed by the law of war. There were 80 such detainees as of the date of this report.

Military Operations in Niger in Support of U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives

United States military personnel in Niger continue to provide support for intelligence collection and to facilitate intelligence sharing with French forces conducting operations in the Sahel and with other partners in the region. The total number of U.S. military personnel deployed to Niger is approximately 420.

Military Operations in Cameroon in Support of U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives

Approximately 250 U.S. military personnel are deployed to Cameroon, with the consent of the Government of Cameroon, to conduct airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations in the region. These forces are equipped with weapons for the purpose of providing their own force protection and security, and they will remain in Cameroon until their support is no longer needed.

MILITARY OPERATIONS RELATED TO THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY

United States military personnel with appropriate combat equipment remain deployed to various countries in the central Africa region to serve as advisors to regional forces of the African Union Regional Task Force that are working to apprehend or remove Joseph Kony and other senior Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leaders from the battlefield and to protect local populations. Additional information about military operations related to the LRA is provided in the classified annex.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN EGYPT

Approximately 700 military personnel are assigned to or supporting the U.S. contingent of the Multinational Force and Observers, which have been present in Egypt since 1981.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN JORDAN

At the request of the Government of Jordan, approximately 2,200 U.S. military personnel are deployed to Jordan to support the security of Jordan and promote regional stability. These forces will remain in Jordan, in full coordination with the Government of Jordan, until the

security situation becomes such that they are no longer needed.

U.S./NATO OPERATIONS IN KOSOVO

The U.N. Security Council authorized Member States to establish a NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Resolution 1244 on June 10, 1999. The original mission of KFOR was to monitor, verify, and, when necessary, enforce compliance with the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the then-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now Serbia), while maintaining a safe and secure environment. Today, KFOR deters renewed hostilities in cooperation with local authorities, bilateral partners, and international institutions. The principal military tasks of KFOR forces are to help maintain a safe and secure environment and to ensure freedom of movement throughout Kosovo. The U.S. contribution to KFOR is approximately 660 U.S. military personnel out of the total strength of approximately 4,475 personnel.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in all of these operations pursuant to my constitutional and statutory authority as Commander in Chief and as Chief Executive (including the authority to carry out Public Law 107–40 and other statutes), as well as my constitutional and statutory authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States. Officials of my Administration and I communicate regularly with the leadership and other Members of Congress with regard to these deployments and we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Paul D. Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Remarks on United States Strategy To Counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization at the Department of the Treasury
June 14, 2016

I just met with my National Security Council as part of our regular effort to review and intensify our campaign to destroy the terrorist group ISIL. Our meeting was planned before the terrible attack in Orlando. But obviously, that tragedy—the awful loss of life—shaped much of our work today. In all of our efforts, foremost in our minds is the loss and the grief of the people of Orlando—those who died, those who are still recovering, the families who have seen their loved ones harmed, the friends of ours who are lesbian and gay and bisexual and transgender who were targeted. I want to remind them that they are not alone. The American people and our allies and friends all over the world, stand with you and are thinking about you and are praying for you.

As Director Comey has said, we currently do not have any information to indicate that a foreign terrorist group directed the attack in Orlando. It is increasingly clear, however, that the killer took in extremist information and propaganda over the Internet. He appears to have been an angry, disturbed, unstable young man who became radicalized. As we know all too well, terrorist groups like ISIL have called on people around the world and here in the United States to attack innocent civilians. Their propaganda, their videos, their postings are pervasive and more easily accessible than we want. This individual appears to have absorbed some of that. And during his killing spree, the shooter in Orlando pledged allegiance to ISIL.

As I've said before, these lone actors or small cells of terrorists are very hard to detect and very hard to prevent. But across our government, at every level—Federal, State, and local, military and civilian—we are doing everything in our power to stop these kinds of attacks. We work to succeed a hundred percent of the time. An attacker, as we saw in Orlando, only has to succeed once. Our extraordinary personnel—our intelligence, our military, our

homeland security, our law enforcement—have prevented many attacks and saved many lives. And we can never thank them enough. But we are all sobered by the fact that, despite the extraordinary, hard work, something like Orlando can occur.

In our meeting today, Director Comey updated us on the investigation in Orlando. Secretary Johnson reviewed the measures we continue to take on behalf of our homeland security. Secretary Carter and Chairman Dunford reviewed the military campaign against ISIL. And I want to thank Secretary Lew and his team here at Treasury for hosting us and for their tireless efforts to cut off the money that ISIL relies on to fund its terror network.

At the outset, I want to reiterate our objective in this fight. Our mission is to destroy ISIL. Since I last updated the American people on our campaign 2 months ago, we've seen that this continues to be a difficult fight, but we are making significant progress. Over the past 2 months, I've authorized a series of steps to ratchet up our fight against ISIL: additional U.S. personnel, including special forces, in Syria to assist local forces battling ISIL there; additional advisers to work more closely with Iraqi security forces and additional assets, including attack helicopters; and additional support for local forces in northern Iraq. Our aircraft continue to launch from the USS *Harry Truman*, now in the Mediterranean. Our B–52 bombers are hitting ISIL with precision strikes. Targets are being identified and hit even more quickly, so far, 13,000 airstrikes. So this campaign at this stage is firing on all cylinders.

And as a result, ISIL is under more pressure than ever before. ISIL continues to lose key leaders. This includes Salman Abu Shahib, the senior military leader in Mosul; Abu Sa'ad al-Sudani, who plotted external attacks; Shakir Waheib, ISIL's military leader in Iraq's Anbar Province; and Maher al-Bilawi, the top ISIL commander in Fallujah. So far, we've taken out more than 120 top ISIL leaders and commanders. And our message is clear: If you target America and our allies, you will not be safe. You will never be safe.

ISIL continues to lose ground in Iraq. In the past 2 months, local forces in Iraq, with coalition support, have liberated the western town of Rutbah and have also pushed up the Euphrates River Valley, liberating the strategic town of Hit and breaking the ISIL siege of Haditha. Iraqi forces have surrounded Fallujah and begun to move into the city. Meanwhile, in the north, Iraqi forces continue to push up the Tigris River Valley, making gains around Makhmour and now preparing to tighten the noose around ISIL in Mosul. All told, ISIL has now lost nearly half of the populated territory that it once controlled in Iraq, and it will lose more.

ISIL continues to lose ground in Syria as well. Assisted by our special operations forces, a coalition of local forces is now pressuring the key town of Manbij, which means the noose is tightening around ISIL in Raqqa as well. In short, our coalition continues to be on offense. ISIL is on defense. And it's now been a full year since ISIL has been able to mount a major successful offensive operation in either Syria or Iraq.

As ISIL continues to lose territory, it also continues to lose the money that it is—that is its lifeblood. As a result of our strikes against its oil infrastructure and supply lines, we believe that we've cut ISIL's revenue from oil by millions of dollars per month. In destroying the storage sites where they keep their cash, we've deprived ISIL of many millions more.

Thanks to the great work of Secretary Lew and many others here today—and working with nations and financial institutions around the world—ISIL is now effectively cut off from the international financial system. Cutting off ISIL's money may not be as dramatic as military strikes, but it is critically important. And we're seeing the results. ISIL's cash reserves are down. It has had to cut salaries for its fighters. It's resorting to more extortion of those trapped in its grip. And by ISIL's own admission, some of its own leaders have been caught stealing cash and gold. Once again, ISIL's true nature has been revealed: These are not religious warriors, they are thugs, and they are thieves.

In continuing to push on this front, I wanted to mention that it is critical for our friends in the Senate to confirm Adam Szubin, my nominee for Under Secretary of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence. Adam has served in Democratic and Republican administrations. Everyone agrees he's eminently qualified. He has been working on these kinds of issues for years. It's now been more than a year since I nominated him—more than 420 days—and he still has not been given a full vote. There is no good reason for it. It is inexcusable. So it's time for the Senate to do its job, put our national security first, and have a vote on Adam Szubin that can lead our financial fight against ISIL and help keep our country safe.

ISIL's ranks are shrinking as well. Their morale is sinking. As one defender—as one defector said, ISIL "is not bringing Islam to the world, and people need to know that." Thanks to international efforts, the flow of foreign fighters—including from America to Syria and Iraq—has plummeted. In fact, our intelligence community now assesses that the ranks of ISIL fighters has been reduced to the lowest levels in more than 2½ years.

Even as we continue to destroy ISIL militarily, we're addressing the larger forces that have allowed these terrorists to gain traction in parts of the world. With regard to Iraq, this means helping Iraqis stabilize liberated communities and promote inclusive governance so ISIL cannot return.

With regard to Syria, it means our continued support for the fragile cessation of hostilities there. The cessation of hostilities has not stopped all or even most of the hardship on the Syrian people, the hardship on civilians. And the Asad regime has been the principal culprit in violating the cessation of hostilities. ISIL and al-Nusra, which is Al Qaida's affiliate in Syria, also continue to terrorize Syrians. But as fragile and incomplete as the cessation is, it has saved lives and it has allowed the delivery of some lifesaving aid to Syrians who are in desperate need. And as difficult as it is, we will continue to push for a political process that can end the civil war and result in a transition away from Asad.

Beyond Syria and Libya—beyond Syria and Iraq, ISIL is also losing ground in Libya. Forces of the Libyan unity Government are going after ISIL in their stronghold in Sirte. And we'll continue to assist the new Libyan Government as it works to secure its country.

Lastly, here at home, if we really want to help law enforcement protect Americans from homegrown extremists, the kind of tragedies that occurred at San Bernardino and that now have occurred in Orlando, there is a meaningful way to do that. We have to make it harder for people who want to kill Americans to get their hands on weapons of war that let them kill dozens of innocents. It is absolutely true, we cannot prevent every tragedy. But we know that, consistent with the Second Amendment, there are common-sense steps that could reduce gun violence and could reduce the lethality of somebody who intends to do other people harm. We should give ATF the resources they need to enforce the gun laws that we already have. People with possible ties to terrorism who aren't allowed on a plane shouldn't be allowed to buy a gun.

Enough talking about being tough on terrorism. Actually be tough on terrorism, and stop making it easy as possible for terrorists to buy assault weapons. Reinstate the assault weapons ban. Make it harder for terrorists to use these weapons to kill us. Otherwise, despite extraordinary efforts across our Government—by local law enforcement, by our intelligence agencies, by our military—despite all the sacrifices that folks make, these kinds of events are going to keep on happening. And the weapons are only going to get more powerful.

And let me make a final point. For a while now, the main contribution of some of my friends on the other side of the aisle have made in the fight against ISIL is to criticize this administration and me for not using the phrase "radical Islam." That's the key, they tell us. We can't beat ISIL unless we call them "radical Islamists." What exactly would using this label accomplish? What exactly would it change? Would it make ISIL less committed to trying to kill Americans? Would it bring in more allies? Is there a military strategy that is served

by this? The answer is none of the above. Calling a threat by a different name does not make it go away. This is a political distraction. Since before I was President, I've been clear about how extremist groups have perverted Islam to justify terrorism. As President, I have repeatedly called on our Muslim friends and allies at home and around the world to work with us to reject this twisted interpretation of one of the world's great religions.

There has not been a moment in my 7½ years as President where we have not been able to pursue a strategy because we didn't use the label "radical Islam." Not once has an adviser of mine said, man, if we really use that phrase, we're going to turn this whole thing around. Not once. So if someone seriously thinks that we don't know who we're fighting, if there's anyone out there who thinks we're confused about who our enemies are, that would come as a surprise to the thousands of terrorists who we've taken off the battlefield.

If the implication is that those of us up here and the thousands of people around the country and around the world who are working to defeat ISIL aren't taking the fight seriously, that would come as a surprise to those who have spent these last 7½ years dismantling Al Qaida in the FATA, for example, including the men and women in uniform who put their lives at risk and the special forces that I ordered to get bin Laden and are now on the ground in Iraq and in Syria. They know full well who the enemy is. So do the intelligence and law enforcement officers who spend countless hours disrupting plots and protecting all Americans, including politicians who tweet and appear on cable news shows. They know who the nature of the enemy is.

So there's no magic to the phrase "radical Islam." It's a political talking point; it's not a strategy. And the reason I am careful about how I describe this threat has nothing to do with political correctness and everything to do with actually defeating extremism. Groups like ISIL and Al Qaida want to make this war a war between Islam and America or between Islam and the West. They want to claim that they are the true leaders of over a billion Muslims around the world who reject their crazy notions. They want us to validate them by implying that they speak for those billion-plus people; that they speak for Islam. That's their propaganda. That's how they recruit. And if we fall into the trap of painting all Muslims with a broad brush and imply that we are at war with an entire religion, then we're doing the terrorists' work for them.

Now, up until this point, this argument about labels has mostly just been partisan rhetoric. And sadly, we've all become accustomed to that kind of partisanship, even when it involves the fight against these extremist groups. And that kind of yapping has not prevented folks across government from doing their jobs, from sacrificing and working really hard to protect the American people.

But we are now seeing how dangerous this kind of mindset and this kind of thinking can be. We're starting to see where this kind of rhetoric and loose talk and sloppiness about who exactly we're fighting, where this can lead us. We now have proposals from the presumptive Republican nominee for President of the United States to bar all Muslims from emigrating to America. We hear language that singles out immigrants and suggests entire religious communities are complicit in violence. Where does this stop? The Orlando killer, one of the San Bernardino killers, the Fort Hood killer—they were all U.S. citizens.

Are we going to start treating all Muslim Americans differently? Are we going to start subjecting them to special surveillance? Are we going to start discriminating against them because of their faith? We've heard these suggestions during the course of this campaign. Do Republican officials actually agree with this? Because that's not the America we want. It doesn't reflect our democratic ideals. It won't make us more safe, it will make us less safe, fueling ISIL's notion that the West hates Muslims, making young Muslims in this country and around the world feel like no matter what they do, they're going to be under suspicion and under attack. It makes Muslim Americans feel like their Government is betraying

them. It betrays the very values America stands for.

We've gone through moments in our history before when we acted out of fear, and we came to regret it. We've seen our government mistreat our fellow citizens. And it has been a shameful part of our history.

This is a country founded on basic freedoms, including freedom of religion. We don't have religious tests here. Our Founders, our Constitution, our Bill of Rights are clear about that. And if we ever abandon those values, we would not only make it a lot easier to radicalize people here and around the world, but we would have betrayed the very things we are trying to protect—the pluralism and the openness, our rule of law, our civil liberties—the very things that make this country great, the very things that make us exceptional. And then, the terrorists would have won. And we cannot let that happen. I will not let that happen.

Two weeks ago, I was at the commencement ceremony at the Air Force Academy. And it could not have been more inspiring to see these young people stepping up, dedicated to serve and protect this country. And part of what was inspiring was the incredible diversity of these cadets. We saw cadets who are straight applauding classmates who were openly gay. We saw cadets born here in America applauding classmates who are immigrants and love this country so much they decided they wanted to be part of our Armed Forces. We saw cadets and families of all religions applaud cadets who are proud, patriotic Muslim Americans serving their country in uniform, ready to lay their lives on the line to protect you and to protect me. We saw male cadets applauding for female classmates who can now serve in combat positions. That's the American military. That's America: one team, one Nation. Those are the values that ISIL is trying to destroy, and we shouldn't help them do it.

Our diversity and our respect for one another, our drawing on the talents of everybody in this country, our making sure that we are treating everybody fairly—that we're not judging people on the basis of what faith they are or what race they are or what ethnicity they are or what their sexual orientation is—that's what makes this country great. That's the spirit we see in Orlando. That's the unity and resolve that will allow us to defeat ISIL. That's what will preserve our values and our ideals that define us as Americans. That's how we're going to defend this Nation, and that's how we're going to defend our way of life.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:18 p.m. in the Cash Room. In his remarks, he referred to Omar Mateen, suspected gunman in the terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, FL, on June 12; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., USMC; Shakir Waheib, also known as Abu Wahib, an ISIL operative who was killed in a U.S. airstrike in Anbar Province, Iraq, on May 6; a U.S. citizen and ISIL defector known publicly as "Mo"; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; Donald J. Trump, chairman and president, Trump Organization, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate; and Nidal M. Hasan, a former Army psychiatrist who was convicted in the shooting at Fort Hood, TX, on November 5, 2009. He also referred to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan.

Remarks at the United State of Women Summit
June 14, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Can you please give it up again for Mikaila? What an amazing young lady. I will be back on the job market in 7 months, so I hope she is hiring. [*Laughter*]

I was just told backstage, when she was asked to introduce me, there were some folks who were organizing this amazing event that said, is she going to feel a little nervous speaking in front of 5,000 people? And so they asked her, and she said, oh, no, I just spoke to 11,000 last week. [*Laughter*] So she was—we were looking backstage—she was

on her tippy-toes with her entrepreneurial self. [*Laughter*]

So I know you're really here to see Michelle. Or Oprah. Actually, they're together, so you're here to see both of them. [*Laughter*] I cannot compete with them.

Audience members. We love you, Michelle.

The President. [*Laughter*] But I did want to stop by and make one thing very clear: I may be a little grayer than I was 8 years ago, but this is what a feminist looks like. Of course, in my household, there's no choice. [*Laughter*]

It is great to be with so many friends. One of my first acts as President was to establish the White House Council on Women and Girls, led by Tina Tchen and Valerie Jarrett, and they've worked with a lot of you very closely. We're so appreciative of those of you who've helped not just make this event possible, but have guided a lot of our thinking across our administration.

We've got some outstanding Members of Congress, of course, including my dear friend and one of the finest Speakers we've ever had and hope to soon have again, Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi. And I want to thank all of you who worked so hard to make this event happen. Because this is an opportunity to reflect on how far we've come, and why it is we've got to keep going.

It was almost a hundred years ago that Alice Paul and her fellow suffragists were arrested for picketing outside the White House for the right to vote. Today, women make up more than half of the electorate. For the first time in history, a woman is a major party's presumptive Presidential nominee. And we are here at the first-ever White House Summit on the United State of Women.

Because of all of you, over the past 7 years, we have significantly improved the lives of women and girls not just here at home, but around the world. And I could not be prouder of what we've accomplished. I want to talk about why it matters and why we've got to do more.

Some of you may know that on Friday, my older daughter Malia graduated from high school. And I sat in the back and wore dark glasses. [*Laughter*] And only cried once, but it was—[*laughter*]—I made this weird sound because I was choking back tears. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, the President made a crying sound.*]

And people looked at me; the people sitting in front of us turned back. And then, I suppressed it. [*Laughter*] But I was thinking about how she is graduating at this extraordinary time for women in America.

The year I was born, in 1961, women made up less than 40 percent of college students. Today, you earn almost 60 percent of college degrees, make up roughly half of the workforce. Back then, the pill was still illegal in some States. And today, thanks to the Affordable Care Act, birth control is free. In the old days, women actually needed a husband to open a credit card. Today, more women are choosing to be single, and all Americans are able to marry whoever they love.

Fifty-four years ago, Katherine Johnson did the behind-the-scenes math to put a man on—to put a man in orbit. Today, almost 60 women have blasted into space themselves. When I was growing up, fewer than 300,000 girls played high school sports. Today, because of title IX, more than 3 million girls are on the field. And women are leading America at every level of society, from Hollywood to Silicon Valley, from the C-suite to the Federal bench to the Federal Reserve.

And that is progress. It's real, and we have to celebrate it, but we also have to remember that progress is not inevitable. It's the result of decades of slow, tireless, often frustrating and unheralded work by people like Dorothy Pitman Hughes and Gloria Steinem, who is here today, people who opened our eyes to the discrimination, both subtle and overt, that women face; people like Pauli Murray and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who insisted on equal justice under the law; people like Wilma Mankiller and Patsy Mink, who redefined what leadership looks like; and yes, people like Hillary Clinton who have raised the expectations of our daughters—and our sons—for what is possible.

In other words, our progress has been the result of countless ordinary women and men whose names will never be written into the history books or chiseled on monuments, but who dedicated their lives to ensuring that America lives up to its promise of liberty and justice for all.

And what's also true is, is that despite all that incredible progress, we are living at a time of great change, a time where people are economically anxious. Unemployment has dropped below 5 percent. Wages are growing again. But while we've made progress in narrowing the gap between rich and poor, it is still too big and the trend lines, because of globalization and automation, are still upon us.

You hear politicians peddle the fiction that blocking immigrants or cutting off trade or quote, unquote, big Government are all to blame, but we know what the causes are. The rise of global competition, the weakening of the labor movement and participation in unions, the automation of more jobs, the race of technology—all these trends have the potential of leaving workers behind. They let a few at the top do even better. And we see some of those divisions not just between groups, but within groups. There are women who have never had more opportunity, but there are a lot of women who are still stuck in the toughest of economic circumstances.

There is an important reason that so many working families feel like the system is rigged, and it's because the economy hasn't caught up to some of the enormous changes that have transformed America over the past 50 years. Those days when the average family was a dad who went to work every day and a mom who stayed at home and did all the unpaid labor, that's not what our economy looks like anymore. Household and work arrangements come in all shapes and all combinations, and yet our workplace policies still look like they're straight out of "Mad Men."

I will tell you, a lot of the problems that cross my desk are really hard to solve. If they end up on my desk, it's because other people couldn't solve them. [*Laughter*] But this issue of how we support working families, the policies that we could put in place that would make a meaningful difference, here we actually have solutions right in front of us. Just as we know what the problems are, we know what some of the solutions are.

We need equal pay for equal work. We need paid family and sick leave. We need affordable childcare. We've got to raise the minimum wage. If we're truly a nation of family values, we wouldn't put up with the fact that many women can't even get a paid day off to give birth. We should guarantee paid maternity leave and paid paternity leave too. That's how you value families. That's how employers retain great workers. And it's good for women, because when childcare falls disproportionately on mothers, as it often does, it makes it that much harder to advance in their careers.

So we've got to retool our system so that modern families and modern businesses can thrive. And let me be clear, this is not about big Government or expanding some fictional welfare-and-food-stamp state or the 47 percent mooching off the Government. It is accounting for the realities of how people live now, today: the necessities of a 21st-century economy.

We've gotten some things done through executive actions. When we had a cooperative Congress, we got a whole lot more done. So far, a lot of Republicans in Congress have been unwilling to act on these agenda items that I just mentioned. But we just keep on looking for ways to get stuff done. They keep on waiting for this whole lame duck thing to happen. I don't—[*laughter*]. Let me tell you, it will happen as soon as I've elected a really good successor to carry on our policies. But until then, we're working pretty hard. [*Laughter*]

But we've made progress. The first bill I signed into law was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. And I know some of you have seen Lilly here today. We passed the Affordable Care Act to give more Americans the security of health care coverage so that not only people without health insurance could finally get it, but people who had health insurance were treated fairly so that, for example, no insurer could charge you more just for being a woman. Dry cleaners are next. [*Laughter*] Valerie, we

need to work on that, don't we? [*Laughter*] Those little blouses of yours. [*Laughter*] I don't know why they charge so much. [*Laughter*]

So my administration has taken what action that we can. And we've strengthened equal pay protections and paid sick leave for Federal contractors, enhanced work flexibility for all Federal employees, raised the minimum wage for Federal contract workers, extended overtime pay protections to over 4 million workers across the country. We try to set a good example, providing my staff with 12 weeks of paid parental leave. And by the way, we've been having a lot of babies, I notice, in the White House—[*laughter*]—which I'm happy about. I love babies. They bring them into the Oval Office; they make me feel good. [*Laughter*]

This is the right thing to do; it's the smart thing to do. And the great news is, we're not the only ones doing it. You've got cities and States and businesses across the country that are adjusting to meet the needs of today's workers. In fact, today we can announce that 28 of America's leading businesses are committed to closing the gender pay gap. We should encourage more businesses to join them. We should shop and frequent those companies that are doing the right thing because the truth is, most folks agree with each other on this. We don't have to have Congress agree with us, we can go ahead and make progress without waiting for them. They'll catch up eventually. They're usually a lagging indicator on these issues. [*Laughter*]

If we really want workplace policies that work for everybody, I will say, though, it would help if we had more women in Congress. It would help if we had more women in the corner suite. I have a corner suite, by the way. [*Laughter*] Just making that connection for you. [*Laughter*]

If we are going to truly change our policies and our politics, then we're also going to have to change something else though. We're going to have to be honest with ourselves. We're going to have to change something else. We're going to have to change the way we see ourselves. And this is happening already, but I want us to be more intentional about it. I know I'm preaching to the choir here, but we're still boxed in by stereotypes about how men and women should behave.

As the great Shirley Chisholm once said, "The emotional, sexual, and psychological stereotyping of females begin when the doctor says, 'It's a girl.'" And that has consequences for all of us, whether we're men or women, Black, White, gay, straight, transgender, or otherwise.

We need to keep changing the attitude that raises our girls to be demure and our boys to be assertive, that criticizes our daughters for speaking out and our sons for shedding a tear. We need to change the attitude that punishes women for their sexuality, but gives men a pat on the back for theirs. We need to change an Internet where women are routinely harassed and threatened when they go online. We need to keep changing the attitude that congratulates men for changing a diaper, stigmatizes full-time dads, penalizes working moms. We need to keep changing the attitude that prioritizes being confident, competitive, and ambitious in the workplace, unless you're a woman.

We need to keep changing a culture that shines a particularly unforgiving light on women and girls of color. About how they look, about how they feel, about what they should or should not do. Michelle will talk about this a little bit. She's talked about this. Despite her extraordinary achievements and success, the fact that she is—she is an American original, she is unique, but she still had times where she's had doubts, where she's had to worry whether she was acting the right way or looking the right way or whether she was being too assertive or too angry. You remember that?

So we've been working to change these stereotypes. That's why we're encouraging more girls to pursue their love for science and technology and engineering and math. That's why we've highlighted women trailblazers and encouraged media to depict more examples of women in STEM, because it's hard to be what you can't see. It's why we've launched a movement of women and men to fight campus sexual assault, because it's on all of us to stop it.

It's why we're changing the culture in our military, from the top down, to take this issue seriously. It's why we're working with communities and businesses and foundations to rethink workplace policies and fund women entrepreneurs and expand female leadership and create more opportunities for girls and women of color. Everybody has a role to play in America.

And even as we make progress at home, we look abroad and we know that any country that oppresses half the population—that doesn't let them go to school or work and does not give them control over their own bodies—that's a society that will not work over the long term. It will not reach its potential. And this is a national security issue. As Commander in Chief, I've seen how the ideology that leads Boko Haram to kidnap schoolgirls and leads ISIL to enslave and rape women is the same ideology that leads to instability and violence and terrorism. There's a connection there.

And so we need to be clear about what we're about, what we stand for. Because organizations and ideologies that are repressive and cultivate violence and anger, those are—there's a running thread, that is dangerous and poses a threat to pluralism and tolerance and openness.

So I've made advancing gender equality a foreign policy priority. And we've implemented a comprehensive strategy to end gender-based violence around the world, from prevention, to treating survivors, to bringing perpetrators to justice. And we're helping to remove barriers that prevent women from participating fully in their societies. We're empowering the next generation of women by investing in adolescent girls and advancing the "Let Girls Learn" initiative to get 62 million girls into school.

This is the future that we're building, one where all of us here at home and around the world are free to live out our dreams; where our children's aspirations aren't segregated into pink and blue; where working families don't have to choose between taking care of a loved one and earning a paycheck; where women and girls, no matter where they live, are free from fear of violence, including gun violence; where hatred against women or hatred against the LGBT community that doesn't neatly fit into some predetermined notions of how people should be or how they love, where that is no longer the operative rule in any society; a future where women lead half our businesses, make up half of Congress; where our girls know they can hold any job and run any company and compete on any field and perform on any stage and science the heck out of any challenge. That's the future we're trying to build.

And the good news is, this is the future my daughters' generation already believes in. They believe every door is open to them. They're not engaging in any kind of self-censorship. They're not going to hold themselves back. It couldn't occur to them that they couldn't rise to the top of whatever field they choose. It wouldn't occur to them not to accept all people, no matter how they identify or who they love. They think discrimination is for losers. They think it's weird that we haven't already had a woman President. They expect the world to catch up to them.

They expect the world to catch up to them, and I have no doubt that we will. It will take leadership. It will take the right policies. It's going to take creating more opportunities. It requires us telling each other and our children the right stories, because the stories we tell matter.

We admire the men who shaped our country, and rightfully so; the men we see as heroes—from Alexander Hamilton to Muhammad Ali—for their confidence and their courage in believing they could change our Nation that—this idea of self-creation, that there's nothing holding us back. In them, we see America itself, constantly reinventing itself, fearless, looking out over the horizon at the next frontier.

But our country is not just all about the Benjamins, it's about the Tubmans too. We need all our young people to know that Clara Barton and Lucretia Mott and Sojourner Truth and Eleanor Roosevelt and Dorothy Height, those aren't just for Women's History Month.

They're the authors of our history, women who shaped our destiny. They need to know that.

A woman did not magically appear on a space shuttle. It took Sally Ride's relentless commitment, Mae Jemison's boundless courage, to shatter that glass ceiling. A group of California farmworkers, they weren't just handed their rights. It took Dolores Huerta organizing and mobilizing, fighting for the dignity and justice they deserved.

Rosa Parks wasn't simply a tired seamstress who sat down by accident, she was a civil rights leader with the eye of a strategist and the heart of a warrior. She had the confidence to board on that bus, the courage to risk her own life and liberty for the sake of ours. History did not fall into her lap, she seized that moral arc and she bent it with her bare hands in the direction of justice.

That's the story that's still being written, today, by our modern day heroes like Nancy Pelosi or Sonia Sotomayor or Billie Jean King or Laverne Cox or Sheryl Sandberg or Oprah Winfrey or Mikaila Ulmer or Michelle Obama, the countless ordinary people every day who are bringing us closer to our highest ideals. That's the story we're going to keep on telling, so our girls see that they, too, are America: confident and courageous and, in the words of Audre Lorde, "deliberate and afraid of nothing."

That's the country we love, and I've never been optimistic—as optimistic as I am now that we're going to create a country where everybody, no matter who they are or what they look like or where they come from or who they love, can make of their lives what they will. And together, we can build a world that's more just and more prosperous and more free. That's the job for all of us.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:46 p.m. in Hall B at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to 11-year-old Austin, TX, entrepreneur Mikaila Ulmer; Oprah Winfrey, chairman and chief executive officer, HARPO Entertainment Group; former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in her capacity as a Democratic Presidential candidate; Dorothy Pitman Hughes and Gloria M. Steinem, cofounding editors, Ms. magazine; Lilly Ledbetter, former employee, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. plant in Gadsden, AL; Mae C. Jemison, former astronaut and physician, National Aeronautics and Space Administration; Dolores C. Huerta, cofounder, United Farmworkers of America; former professional tennis player Billie Jean King, founder, Billie Jean King Leadership Initiative; actor Laverne Cox; and Sheryl K. Sandberg, chief operating officer, Facebook, Inc. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Statement on the Death of Former Senator George V. Voinovich
June 14, 2016

Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of former Senator George Voinovich. As was clear from his 46 years in public service, George was a true patriot who dedicated his life to serving the people of Ohio. His dedication is underscored by the fact that he holds the record for being elected to more public offices than any other Ohioan in history. George leaves behind a powerful legacy of service to his State and country that will not soon be forgotten. Michelle and I offer his wife Janet and their children and grandchildren our condolences during this difficult time.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Proposed Agreement for Cooperation Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy

June 14, 2016

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit to the Congress, pursuant to sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2153(b), (d)) (the "Act"), the text of a proposed Agreement for Cooperation Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy (the "Agreement"). I am also pleased to transmit my written approval, authorization, and determination concerning the Agreement, and an unclassified Nuclear Proliferation Assessment Statement (NPAS) concerning the proposed Agreement. (In accordance with section 123 of the Act, as amended by Title XII of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–277), a classified annex to the NPAS, prepared by the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Director of National Intelligence, summarizing relevant classified information, will be submitted to the Congress separately.) The joint memorandum submitted to me by the Secretaries of State and Energy and a letter from the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission stating the views of the Commission are also enclosed. An addendum to the NPAS containing a comprehensive analysis of Norway's export control system with respect to nuclear-related matters, including interactions with other countries of proliferation concern and the actual or suspected nuclear, dual-use, or missile-related transfers to such countries, pursuant to section 102A(w) of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3024(w)), is being submitted separately by the Director of National Intelligence.

The proposed Agreement has been negotiated in accordance with the Act and other applicable law. In my judgment, it meets all applicable statutory requirements and will advance the nonproliferation and other foreign policy interests of the United States.

The proposed Agreement contains all the provisions required by section 123 a. of the Act, and provides a comprehensive framework for peaceful nuclear cooperation with Norway based on a mutual commitment to nuclear nonproliferation. It would permit the transfer of unclassified information, material, equipment (including reactors), and components for nuclear research and nuclear power production. Norway has no nuclear power program, and no current plans for establishing one, but the proposed Agreement would facilitate cooperation on such a program if Norway's plans change in the future. Norway does have an active nuclear research program and the focus of cooperation under the proposed Agreement, as under the previous agreement, is expected to be in the area of nuclear research. The proposed Agreement would not permit transfers of Restricted Data, sensitive nuclear technology, sensitive nuclear facilities or major critical components of such facilities.

The proposed Agreement would provide advance, long-term (programmatic) consent to Norway for the retransfer for storage or reprocessing of irradiated nuclear material (spent fuel) subject to the Agreement to France, the United Kingdom, or other countries or destinations as may be agreed upon in writing. The United States has given similar advance consent to various other partners, including to Norway under the previous U.S.-Norway Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation Agreement that was in force from 1984 to 2014. The proposed Agreement would give the United States the option to revoke the advance consent if it considers that it cannot be continued without a significant increase of the risk of proliferation or without jeopardizing national security.

The proposed Agreement will have a term of 30 years from the date of its entry into force, unless terminated by either party on 1 year's advance written notice. In the event of termination or expiration of the proposed Agreement, key nonproliferation conditions and controls will continue in effect as long as any material, equipment, or component subject to the proposed Agreement remains in the territory of the party concerned or under its jurisdiction or control anywhere, or until such time as the parties agree that such items are no longer usable for any nuclear activity relevant from the point of view of safeguards.

Norway is a non-nuclear-weapon State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Norway has concluded a safeguards agreement and additional protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Norway is a party to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, which establishes international standards of physical protection for the use, storage, and transport of nuclear material. It is also a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, whose non-legally binding guidelines set forth standards for the responsible export of nuclear commodities for peaceful use. A more detailed discussion of Norway's domestic civil nuclear activities and its nuclear nonproliferation policies and practices is provided in the NPAS and the NPAS classified annex submitted to the Congress separately.

I have considered the views and recommendations of the interested departments and agencies in reviewing the proposed Agreement and have determined that its performance will promote, and will not constitute an unreasonable risk to, the common defense and security. Accordingly, I have approved the proposed Agreement and authorized its execution and urge that the Congress give it favorable consideration.

This transmission shall constitute a submittal for purposes of both sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Act. My Administration is prepared to begin immediately consultations with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee as provided in section 123 b. Upon completion of the 30 days of continuous session review provided for in section 123 b., the 60 days of continuous session review provided for in section 123 d. shall commence.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 14, 2016.

Remarks at the Congressional Picnic
June 14, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Well, first of all, let's give a big round of applause to the best house band in the world, our outstanding Marine Band. Give them a big round of applause. They can play anything. Bruno Mars. [*Laughter*] Yo-Yo Ma. It doesn't matter. I mean, they sounded great. I was rocking out a little bit in the Oval Office.

It is so good to see all of you at what is just a wonderful event. One of the only things that I don't like about this event is, each year, I see some of the same kids, and they're getting a lot taller—[*laughter*]—which means I'm getting a lot older. But for Members of Congress to be able to bring their families together on an incredible day like this is a true blessing.

Obviously, this has been a difficult week for America because all of us are still grieving for those who were lost in Orlando. All of us still have our thoughts and prayers for the families of those who were killed, but also for those who are still recovering and for the city of Orlando. And one of the things that—when I was talking to the mayor, Buddy Dyer, down there—I emphasized is that this is something that could happen anywhere. And these could be our kids or our brothers or our cousins or nephews, nieces.

And at moments like this, it's critically important for us to remind ourselves of what binds us together as a people: that regardless of race or ethnicity or religion or sexual orientation, we're all Americans, and we look out for each other. We celebrate those things we hold dear and have in common, like love of family and love of country. We mourn together when part of that family is hurt. And I know that that's something that all of you feel, whenever things like this happen, we squeeze our families a little more tightly, and we're reminded of what's important in life.

I'm not going to talk long because I want to shake as many hands as possible, although I've still got to apply the no selfie rule—[*laughter*]—because otherwise, I'm here for, like, 4 hours. But I do want to just say thank you to all of you. I want to say thanks to the Members of Congress who are here. I know that we're at a contentious time in our political life in this country. The truth is, though, it's important not to romanticize the past. Democracy has always been contentious, and it's always messy, because we're a big country and we're a diverse country. And people are not going to agree a hundred percent of the time on some of the big issues that we care about.

But one of the things I've tried to emphasize—and I spoke at a couple of commencements this past month—I said that one of the things about democracy is, is that it works because we try to compromise, even when you think you're a hundred-percent right. In that sense, it's a lot like marriage. [*Laughter*] The—because as fierce and as important as the debates are, the institutions that we built, the Constitution upon which we're founded, the traditions and the habits of the heart that have allowed us to live in this greatest country on Earth—those are what's lasting. Those are more permanent and more important than any immediate difference or debate.

I think it's also important for us to remember at a time when partisanship is seemingly at an alltime high, that none of us are born Democrat or Republican. And the labels we apply to ourselves, they mean something. They indicate commitments or sets of principles that may not always mesh up. But the things that really matter in our lives, they can't be captured by a party label. The things that bind this country together transcend political party. And it's useful for us to remember that as well, when we are engaging in these debates.

And I'm only going to be here a little bit longer——

Audience members. Aww.

The President. No, my lease is running out. [*Laughter*] And I'm already trying to look at the carpet and the walls to make sure I get my deposit back. [*Laughter*] But the—what I've told my staff—and I hope those of you who are serving are keeping in mind every single day—is that this is an extraordinary privilege, our chance to serve the American people; our chance to, in some very small way, shape history in ways that we hope are better. It's precious, and it's a privilege. And we should every single day count our blessings and apply ourselves to the work with an enthusiasm and a vigor that is appropriate for the privilege that the people of America bequeathed upon us.

And the last point I want to make is just, to the families, I want to say thank you. Because certainly, one thing that binds Democrats and Republicans together is that their families carry an enormous burden. You miss stuff. Time flies. You're away for a soccer game or a birthday party or a dance recital. And as somebody who just saw—I cried at my older daughter's graduation. [*Laughter*] It's a reminder that we a lot of times put our families in a tough situation, thinking that perhaps we can do some good. And they may believe in us real hard and make a lot of sacrifices, but they are sacrifices nonetheless.

So to the spouses, to the kids, we just want to say thank you. And that, too, should make us sober and serious about the work that we do, because if we're not actually making this country better, then it's not worth the sacrifice. And we owe it not just to the people who elected us, but also to our own families to make sure that we make the very best of it.

So I want to thank all of you. I want to thank again the Marine Band. I want to point out that sometimes people don't realize, our Marine

Band, these are Active Duty folks. They're serving our country. Our hearts go out to the people of Orlando. But our hearts also are filled with gratitude for those men and women in uniform who serve us every day, those law enforcement and first responders who, at times of desperate need like what we saw in Orlando, are there on the spot, trying to make sure that they're keeping us safe. We are extraordinarily grateful to them.

All right? Have a great time, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:54 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks in Orlando, Florida
June 16, 2016

Four days ago, this community was shaken by an evil and hateful act. Today we are reminded of what is good; that there is compassion and empathy and decency, and most of all, there is love. That's the Orlando that we've seen in recent days, and that is the America that we have seen.

This afternoon the Vice President and I had the opportunity to meet with many of the families here. As you might imagine, their grief is beyond description. Through their pain and through their tears, they told us about the joy that their loved ones had brought to their lives. They talked about their sons or their daughters: so many young people, in their twenties and thirties; so many students who were focused on the future. One young woman was just 18 years old. Another, said her father, was a happy girl with so many dreams.

There were siblings there talking about their brothers and their sisters and how they were role models that they looked up to. There were husbands and wives who had taken a solemn vow, fathers and mothers who gave their full heart to their children. These families could be our families. In fact, they are our family; they're part of the American family. And today the Vice President and I told them, on behalf of the American people, that our hearts are broken too and that we stand with you and that we are here for you and that we are remembering those who you loved so deeply.

As a nation, we've also been inspired by the courage of those who risked their lives and cared for others: partners whose last moments were spent shielding each other, the mother who gave her life to save her son, the former marine whose quick thinking saved dozens of lives.

Joe and I had the chance to thank Mayor Dyer, Chief Mina, Sheriff Demings, all of whom responded in heroic ways; the outstanding police and first responders who were able to, through their professionalism and quick response, rescue so many people. We also owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to all the doctors and all the nurses who have worked day and night to treat the injured, save lives and prevent even more anguish. As one of the doctors here said, "After the worst of humanity reared its ugly head . . . the best of humanity came roaring back." Let me get that quote more precisely: "After the worst of humanity reared its evil head . . . the best of humanity came roaring back."

Now, if we're honest with ourselves, if in fact we want to show the best of our humanity, then we're all going to have to work together at every level of government, across political lines, to do more to stop killers who want to terrorize us. We will continue to be relentless against terrorist groups like ISIL and Al Qaida. We are going to destroy them. We are going to disrupt their networks and their financing and the flow of fighters in and out of war theaters. We're going to disrupt their propaganda that poisons so many minds around the world.

We're going to do all that. Our resolve is clear. But given the fact that the last two terrorist attacks on our soil—Orlando and San Bernardino—were homegrown, carried out, it appears, not by external plotters, not by vast networks or sophisticated cells, but by deranged individuals warped by the hateful propaganda that they had seen over the Internet,

then we're going to have to do more to prevent these kinds of events from occurring. It's going to take more than just our military. It's going to require more than just our intelligence teams. As good as they are, as dedicated as they are, as focused as they are, if you have lone wolf attacks like this, hatched in the minds of a disturbed person, then we're going to have to take different kinds of steps in order to prevent something like this from happening.

Now, those who were killed and injured here were gunned down by a single killer with a powerful assault weapon. The motives of this killer may have been different than the mass shooters in Aurora or Newtown, but the instruments of death were so similar. And now, another 49 innocent people are dead. Another 53 are injured. Some are still fighting for their lives. Some will have wounds that will last a lifetime. We can't anticipate or catch every single deranged person that may wish to do harm to his neighbors or his friends or his coworkers or strangers. But we can do something about the amount of damage that they do. Unfortunately, our politics have conspired to make it as easy as possible for a terrorist or just a disturbed individual like those in Aurora and Newtown to buy extraordinarily powerful weapons, and they can do so legally.

So today, once again, as has been true too many times before, I held and hugged grieving family members and parents, and they asked, why does this keep happening? And they pleaded that we do more to stop the carnage. They don't care about the politics. Neither do I. Neither does Joe. And neither should any parent out here who's thinking about their kids being not in the wrong place, but in places where kids are supposed to be.

This debate needs to change. It's outgrown the old political stalemates. The notion that the answer to this tragedy would be to make sure that more people in a nightclub are similarly armed to the killer defies common sense. Those who defend the easy accessibility of assault weapons should meet these families and explain why that makes sense. They should meet with the Newtown families—some of whom Joe saw yesterday, whose children would now be finishing fifth grade—on why it is that we think our liberties requires these repeated tragedies. That's not the meaning of liberty.

I'm pleased to hear that the Senate will hold votes on preventing individuals with possible terrorist ties from buying guns, including assault weapons. I truly hope that Senators rise to the moment and do the right thing. I hope that Senators who voted no on background checks after Newtown have a change of heart. And then, I hope the House does the right thing, and helps end the plague of violence that these weapons of war inflict on so many young lives.

I've said this before: We will not be able to stop every tragedy. We can't wipe away hatred and evil from every heart in this world. But we can stop some tragedies. We can save some lives. We can reduce the impact of a terrorist attack if we're smart. And if we don't act, we will keep seeing more massacres like this, because we'll be choosing to allow them to happen. We will have said, we don't care enough to do something about it.

Here in Orlando, we are reminded not only of our obligations as a country to be resolute against terrorism, we are reminded not only of the need for us to implement smarter policies to prevent mass shootings, we're also reminded of what unites us as Americans, and that what unites us is far stronger than the hate and the terror of those who target us.

For so many people here who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, the Pulse nightclub has always been a safe haven, a place to sing and dance and, most importantly, to be who you truly are, including for so many people whose families are originally from Puerto Rico. And Sunday morning, that sanctuary was violated in the worst way imaginable. So whatever the motivations of the killer, whatever influences led him down the path of violence and terror, whatever propaganda he was consuming from ISIL and Al Qaida, this was an act of terrorism, but it was also an act of hate. This was an attack on the LGBT community. Americans were targeted because we're a country that has learned to welcome everyone, no mat-

ter who you are or who you love. And hatred towards people because of sexual orientation, regardless of where it comes from, it's a betrayal of what's best in us.

Joe and I were talking on the way over here. You can't break up the world into "us" and "them" and denigrate and express hatred towards groups because of the color of their skin or their faith or their sexual orientation and not feed something very dangerous in this world.

So if there was ever a moment for all of us to reflect and reaffirm our most basic beliefs that everybody counts and everybody has dignity, now is the time. It's a good time for all of us to reflect on how we treat each other and to insist on respect and equality for every human being.

We have to end discrimination and violence against our brothers and sisters who are in the LGBT community, here at home and around the world, especially in countries where they are routinely prosecuted. We have to challenge the oppression of women, wherever it occurs, here or overseas. There's only "us"—Americans.

Here in Orlando, in the men and women taken from us, those who loved them, we see some of the true character of this country: the best of humanity coming roaring back; the love and the compassion and the fierce resolve that will carry us through not just through this atrocity, but through whatever difficult times may confront us.

It's our pluralism and our respect for each other, including a young man who said to a friend, he was "super proud" to be Latino. It's our love of country: the patriotism of an Army reservist who was known as "an amazing officer." And it's our unity: the outpouring of love that so many across our country have shown to our fellow Americans who are LGBT, a display of solidarity that might have been unimaginable even a few years ago.

Out of this darkest of moments, that gives us hope, seeing people reflect, seeing people's best instincts come out, maybe in some cases, minds and hearts changed. It is our strength and our resilience: the same determination of a man who died here who traveled the world, mindful of the risks as a gay man, but who spoke for us all when he said, "We cannot be afraid. . . . We are not going to be afraid."

May we all find that same strength in our own lives. May we all find that same wisdom in how we treat one another. May God bless all who we lost here in Orlando. May He comfort their families. May He heal the wounded. May He bring some solace to those whose hearts have been broken. May He give us resolve to do what's necessary to reduce the hatred of this world, to curb the violence. And may He watch over this country that we call home.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:40 p.m. at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. In his remarks, he referred to Akyra M. Murray, Mercedez M. Flores, Brenda Lee Marquez McCool, Javier Jorge-Reyes, Antonio D. Brown, and Edward Sotomayor, Jr., victims of the terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, FL, on June 12; Cesar Flores, father of Ms. Flores; Isaiah Henderson, son of Ms. Marquez McCool; Imran Yousuf, a former marine who worked as a bouncer at the Pulse nightclub; John W. Mina, chief of police, Orlando, FL; Jerry L. Demings, sheriff, Orange County, FL; Joshua Corsa, senior surgical resident, Orlando Regional Medical Center; Omar Mateen, suspected gunman in the June 12 terrorist attack; and James E. Holmes, who was convicted in the shooting at the Century 16 multiplex in Aurora, CO, on July 20, 2012. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

The President's Weekly Address
June 18, 2016

It's been less than a week since the deadliest mass shooting in American history. And foremost in all of our minds has been the loss and the grief felt by the people of Orlando, especially our friends who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. I visited with the families of

many of the victims on Thursday. And one thing I told them is that they're not alone. The American people and people all over the world are standing with them, and we always will.

The investigation is ongoing, but we know that the killer was an angry and disturbed individual who took in extremist information and propaganda over the Internet and became radicalized. During his killing spree, he pledged allegiance to ISIL, a group that's called on people around the world to attack innocent civilians.

We are and we will keep doing everything in our power to stop these kinds of attacks and to ultimately destroy ISIL. The extraordinary people in our intelligence, military, homeland security, and law enforcement communities have already prevented many attacks, saved many lives, and we won't let up.

Alongside the stories of bravery and healing and coming together over the past week, we've also seen a renewed focus on reducing gun violence. As I said a few days ago, being tough on terrorism requires more than talk. Being tough on terrorism, particularly the sorts of homegrown terrorism that we've seen now in Orlando and San Bernardino, means making it harder for people who want to kill Americans to get their hands on assault weapons that are capable of killing dozens of innocents as quickly as possible. That's something I'll continue to talk about in the weeks ahead.

It's also part of something that I've been thinking a lot about this week, and that's the responsibilities we have to each other. That's certainly true with Father's Day upon us.

I grew up without my father around. While I wonder what my life would have been like if he had been a greater presence, I've also tried extra hard to be a good dad for my own daughters. Like all dads, I worry about my girls' safety all the time, especially when we see preventable violence in places our sons and daughters go every day: their schools and houses of worship; movie theaters; nightclubs, as they get older. It's unconscionable that we allow easy access to weapons of war in these places, and then, even after we see parents grieve for their children, the fact that we as a country do nothing to prevent the next heartbreak makes no sense.

So this past week, I've also thought a lot about dads and moms around the country who've had to explain to their children what happened in Orlando. Time and again, we've observed moments of silence for victims of terror and gun violence. Too often, those moments have been followed by months of silence, by inaction that is simply inexcusable. If we're going to raise our kids in a safer, more loving world, we need to speak up for it. We need our kids to hear us speak up about the risks guns pose to our communities and against a status quo that doesn't make sense. They need to hear us say these things even when those who disagree are loud and are powerful. We need our kids to hear from us why tolerance and equality matter, about the times their absence has scarred our history and how greater understanding will better the future they will inherit. We need our kids to hear our words and also see us live our own lives with love.

And we can't forget our responsibility to remind our kids of the role models whose light shines through in times of darkness: the police and first responders, the lifesaving bystanders and blood donors, those who comfort mourners and visit the wounded, the victims whose last acts on this Earth helped others to safety. They're not just role models for our kids, their actions are examples for all of us.

To be a parent is to come to realize not everything is in our control. But as parents, we should remember there's one responsibility that's always in our power to fulfill: our obligation to give our children unconditional love and support; to show them the difference between right and wrong; to teach them to love, not to hate; and to appreciate our differences not as something to fear, but as a great gift to cherish.

To me, fatherhood means being there. So, in the days ahead, let's be there for each other. Let's be there for our families and for those that are hurting. Let's come together in our communities and as a country. And let's never

forget how much good we can achieve simply by loving one another.

Happy Father's Day to all the dads out there, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:40 p.m. on June 15 in the State Dining Room at the White House for broadcast on June 18. In the address, the President referred to Omar Mateen, suspected gunman in the terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, FL, on June 12. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 17, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 18. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at Yosemite National Park, California
June 18, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody! Well, everybody, have a seat, have a seat. How gorgeous is this day?

Audience members. Yes, we can! Yes, we can! Yes, we can!

The President. Yes, we can enjoy this. [*Laughter*] I—this has to be the perfect way to spend Father's Day and Father's Day weekend. And yesterday our family checked out Carlsbad Caverns down in New Mexico.

Today I want to thank Superintendent Neubacher and all the incredible rangers and staff for hosting us here at Yosemite. They do a great job. We're so proud of them. Give them a big round of applause. We also have here the Congressman for this area, Tom McClintock, who represents the park. We appreciate Congress continuing to work hard to support our national treasures. Give them—give Tom a big round of applause.

So, in the West Wing Lobby, I've got a painting of Vernal Fall and Half Dome, but it looks slightly better in person. [*Laughter*] Just look at this scene. You can't capture this on an iPad or a flatscreen or even an oil painting. You've got to come here and breathe it in yourself.

This park is home to El Capitan and Yosemite Falls, one of the tallest in North America; to deer and to falcons and to bobcats and 2,000-year-old sequoias. It's a park that captures the wonder of the world, that changes you by being here. There's something sacred about this place. And I suppose that's why the walls of this valley were referred to as cathedral walls, because here at Yosemite, we connect not just with our own spirit, but with something greater. It's almost like the spirit of America itself is right here.

So it's no wonder, then, that 150 years ago, President Lincoln first protected the ground on which we stand. And then, Teddy Roosevelt, who called the great trees here a "temple grander than any human architect could possibly build," spent a whole bunch of time camping around here with John Muir, a man who gave life to what's been called America's best idea: our national parks. As he said after his visit: "We are not building this country of ours for a day. It is to last through the ages."

In August, we celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the National Park Service. It's a system that includes more than 400 sites, from Yellowstone to Denali to Gettysburg to Seneca Falls. And since I've took office, I have been proud to build on the work of all those giants who came before me to support our natural resources and to help all Americans get out into the great outdoors.

We've protected more than 265 million acres of public lands and waters. That's more than any administration in history. Now, it does include this really big body of water out in the Pacific Ocean, but we've also already done the second most public lands of any administration of history. We've seen more victories under the Endangered Species Act than any previous administration, from black bears in Louisiana to sea turtles and manatees in Florida. We're restoring vulnerable ecosystems like the Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias right here. We've designated new monuments and historic sites

that better reflect the story of all our people. So along with those famous sites like Gettysburg, we can also see monuments to Cesar Chavez or Pullman porters in Chicago.

And we've got more work to do to preserve our lands and our culture and our history. We're not done yet. In all, last year, more than 305 [million]* people visited America's national parks. And for this centennial, we're asking all Americans to "Find Your Park" so that everyone, including those from underserved communities, can experience these wonders.

For the past few years, we've been offering free entrances to our troops and our military families through Michelle and Jill Biden's Joining Forces initiative. And then last year, we launched what we're calling Every Kid in a Park effort, which gives passes to every fourth grader in the country to explore our parks and forests and public lands with their families for free. Just visit everykidinapark.org.

And by the way, our national parks aren't just fun to explore, they're good for our local and national economies. Sometimes, people try to pose conservation against economic development. But it turns out that studies show that every dollar we invest in our national parks generates $10 for local economies. And these parks help to drive our national outdoor industries—boots and tents and mountain bikes and snowmobiles—and that industry supports 6 million American jobs and almost $650 billion in spending every year. And that's a lot of fleeces and headlamps. [*Laughter*]

So as we look back over the last hundred years, there's plenty to celebrate about a national parks system that is the envy of the world. But when we look to the next century, the next hundred years, the task of protecting our sacred spaces is even more important. And the biggest challenge we're going to face in protecting this place and places like it is climate change.

Make no mistake, climate change is no longer just a threat, it's already reality. I was talking to some of the rangers here. Here in Yosemite, meadows are drying out. Bird ranges are shifting farther northward. Alpine mammals like pikas are being forced further upslope to escape higher temperatures. Yosemite's largest glacier, once a mile wide, is now almost gone. We're also seeing longer, more expensive, more dangerous wildfire seasons, and fires are raging across the West right now. I was just in New Mexico yesterday, which is dealing with a big wildfire, just like folks here in California and four other States, all while it's still really early in the season.

As we look ahead, in the coming years and decades, rising temperatures could mean no more glaciers at Glacier National Park, no more Joshua trees at Joshua Tree National Park. Rising seas could destroy vital ecosystems in the Everglades, and at some point could even threaten icons like the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.

And that's not the America I want to pass on to the next generation. That's not the legacy, I think, any of us want to leave behind. The idea that these places that sear themselves into your memory could be marred or lost to history, that's to be taken seriously. We can't treat these things as something that we deal with later, that it's somebody else's problem. It shouldn't lead to careless suggestions that somehow we don't get serious about the carbon emissions that are released in the atmosphere or that we scrap an international treaty that we spent years just trying to put together to deal with this.

Because the parks belong to all of us. This planet belongs to all of us. It's the only one we've got. And we can't give lip service to that notion, but then oppose the things that are required to protect it. We have to have the foresight and the faith in the future to do what it takes to protect our parks and to protect this planet for generations to come. And that's especially true for our leaders in Washington. It's what Lincoln did when he set aside this ground for all posterity. That's what Muir and Roosevelt did when they inspired the national parks system. That's what our generation has to do.

* White House correction.

We've got to summon that same vision for the future.

We've made good strides. We've jumpstarted a clean energy revolution. We're reducing carbon pollution. We're preserving landscapes. We're rallying the world to tackle climate change together. But we've got to do a lot more. And on this issue, unlike a lot of issues, there is such a thing as being too late.

The good news is, I know we can rise to the challenge. Over the last 7 years, we've proved it. And if we keep at it, we're not just going to safeguard this place, we're going to protect our communities from rising seas and stronger storms and brutal droughts. But we're also going to protect our children's lungs from breathing dirty air. We'll protect vulnerable peoples from displacement. We'll protect our national security, because we won't be seeing refugees displaced because of conflict and scarcity. And we'll build on that legacy of all those who came before us, who stood in these parks more a century ago and talked about an America that lasts through the ages.

You know, I was telling the head of the system here about my first visit to a big national park, up in Yellowstone. I was 11 years old. And I was living in Hawaii, and so this was the first time I had traveled to the mainland. And I came through California, and we went to Chicago and Arizona and then ended in Yellowstone National Park. And I remember, being an 11-year-old kid, the first time I saw a moose—[*laughter*]—in a lake, the first time we drove over a hill and suddenly there was a field full of deer, the first time I saw a bear and her cub.

That changes you. You're not the same after that. And I want to make sure every kid feels that. Studies have shown now that just 5 minutes of time in a green, open space brings your stress levels down. It makes your heartbeat go down. It makes your whole body feel better. It makes your spirit stronger and cleaner.

And we've got kids all across this country who never see a park. There are kids who live miles from here who have never seen this. We've got to change that, because the beauty of the national park system is it belongs to everybody. It is a true expression of our democracy, the notion that we all look after ourselves and our families and we work hard and we make money and we have our own homes and apartments and cars and televisions, but then there's this part of us that is part of everybody, something we have in common, something we share, a place where we connect with each other and to connect to something bigger than ourselves. What an incredible idea. What a worthy investment. What a precious thing we have to pass on to the next generation. Let's make that happen.

Thanks, everybody. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America. And to all the dads out there, Happy Father's Day, guys. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:21 a.m. at Sentinel Bridge. In his remarks, he referred to Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden.

Statement on the Observance of Juneteenth
June 19, 2016

Just outside the Oval Office hangs a painting depicting the night of December 31, 1862. In it, African American men, women, and children crowd around a single pocket watch, waiting for the clock to strike midnight and the Emancipation Proclamation to take effect. As the slaves huddle anxiously in the dimly lit room, we can sense how even 2 more minutes seems like an eternity to wait for one's freedom. But the slaves of Galveston, Texas, had to wait more than 2 years after Lincoln's decree and 2 months after Appomattox to receive word that they were free at last.

Today we commemorate the anniversary of that delayed, but welcome news. Decades of collective action would follow as equality and justice for African Americans advanced slowly, frustratingly, gradually, on our Nation's journey toward a more perfect Union. On this Juneteenth, we remember that struggle as we

reflect on how far we've come as a country. The slaves of Galveston knew their freedom was only a first step, just as the bloodied foot soldiers who crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge 100 years later knew they had to keep marching.

Juneteenth is a time to recommit ourselves to the work that remains undone. We remember that even in the darkest hours, there is cause to hope for tomorrow's light. Today, no matter our race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation, we recommit ourselves to working to free modern-day slaves around the world and to honoring in our own time the efforts of those who fought so hard to steer our country truer to our highest ideals.

Remarks at the SelectUSA Investment Summit
June 20, 2016

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Please have a seat, have a seat. Well, let me begin by thanking Penny, not only for her kind words and friendship, but for her outstanding leadership in promoting American business and making the case for commercial diplomacy. Congratulations not only to Penny, but also her entire team, especially my dear friend Vinai Thummalapally, on yet another sold-out summit. Give Vinai a big round of applause.

Those of you who do not know Vinai, he's a former Ambassador and, more importantly, was one of my roommates in college. [*Laughter*] So he got his job on the merits—[*laughter*]—but it is true that he has some compromising information—[*laughter*]—that if it was ever fully disclosed, I'd be in trouble. [*Laughter*] But he has done an outstanding job.

To all of you who have crossed oceans to be here, welcome. And to all of my Cabinet Secretaries and Ambassadors here, thank you for the extraordinary job that you do.

I've been talking with a lot of young people lately, including on college campuses around the country. And some of you who are visiting from other countries know that when I travel abroad, one of my favorite things to do is to have a town meeting with young people overseas as well.

And one of the things that I remind young people, just to offer them a little bit of perspective, is that no matter how grim the news sometimes seems, no matter how extraordinary the challenges that humanity or America seems to be facing at any given moment, if you had to choose a moment in human history in which to be born, and you didn't know ahead of time who you were going to be—what your nationality was or your gender or race or class—if you had to pick one moment in history that gave you the best chance to succeed, you would choose right now. You would choose this moment, when the world is wealthier, better educated, more open, more tolerant, more connected than it has ever been at any time in human history; less violent, less riven by division. You'd choose today.

And as I think about what you're doing here in this hall, I'd add a corollary to that observation. If you could choose any place and time to invest your business's precious resources, I believe you'd choose right here, right now. If you'd choose a place to expand your portfolio, to place your bets, to open up a plant, to start building the next great new business or service, you would select the U.S.A. Because nowhere in the world and never in history has there ever been a better place to grow your business.

Now, here's why: Never before has the United States recorded 75 straight months of private sector job growth. Never before has our graduation—high school graduation rate been higher, preparing students for college and careers in your industries. Never before have we insured more than 90 percent of our citizens, and we've seen the slowest growth in the price of health care in 50 years. And that's important for a whole host of reasons, including the fact that healthier workers are more productive workers, not to mention better consumers, and more affordable health care makes it easier for your businesses to add jobs and pay a good wage. Never before have we had such high-standard free trade agreements

that level the playing field. And when complete, when we've gotten it done, the Trans-Pacific Partnership will do even more to lower the costs of exporting, eliminating taxes and custom duties, and raising intellectual property standards that protect data and ideas and jobs.

You would choose right here, right now, because no other economy is so crucial for the global economy. No other country can add more innovation to your business or bring your innovative products to more markets. No country has as many top universities, and no country invests more in research and development than we do. In fact, America is responsible for one-quarter of the world's R&D investments. No country can match our competitiveness in cutting-edge manufacturing. No country is home to more entrepreneurs or more supercomputing. No country has done more to build a culture of making and tinkering and entrepreneurship and risk-taking and of innovation and invention.

And no other country is home to more foreign direct investment than the United States of America. Over the last 4 years, no other country has been named by CEOs around the world more frequently as the best place to invest with confidence. And all of this is for a very good reason: In large part because of the decisions we've made since the financial crisis to build our economy on a new foundation for the future, there is no country on Earth that's better positioned for the long run than the United States.

We've doubled our production of clean energy, even as we continue to produce traditional energy sources at an extraordinary pace, which means energy costs are lower here than they are in many other places around the world. Our rule of law, our mature capital markets, all these things contribute to an extraordinary place to do business.

Now, that's a pretty good sales pitch. [*Laughter*] I don't mind being America's pitchman. And in 7 months or so, I'll be on the job market. [*Laughter*] And I'm glad I'm going to be here. [*Laughter*] Because I'm going get on LinkedIn and see what comes up. [*Laughter*]

But the truth is, it's easy to make the case, and it's one each of the economic development organizations represented here can make just as well, because behind it are the most talented and most innovative workers in the world: American workers.

That's why, several years ago, we took the advice of the CEOs on my Jobs Council and started SelectUSA, a team that wakes up every morning with one mission, and that is to bring jobs to America from overseas. They connect foreign investors with local American markets, making it easier for you to build a factory or facility in the United States, making it easier for you to get American workers researching, developing, making, and marketing your products.

In today's world, where business doesn't stop at borders, and when trade is how we shape economic change to our advantage, when the term "global economy" is redundant because of global supply chains being tied into every element and every aspect of our lives, these partnerships are the keys to success for all of us no matter where we live, no matter if you're a small startup or a major multinational. As the local economic development experts here all know, communities that open their doors to foreign investment create more jobs and economic activity than those that don't.

And since we held the first SelectUSA summit 3 years ago, participating companies have invested more than $10 billion in 35 U.S. States and territories. And a lot of them met at this event, in the exhibition hall, or through SelectUSA's online matchmaking program. At last year's summit, an Italian tissue company started a conversation with folks from central Ohio, and next month, they're breaking ground in the town of Circleville on a manufacturing facility that will create hundreds of jobs in a part of the American Midwest that needs them. It will be the largest private sector investment in Circleville in decades, and it started right here at SelectUSA.

At that same summit, an agricultural tech company from Surat, India, met economic development representatives from Missouri. And within a year, the company established its U.S.

headquarters in St. Louis. And we want more success stories like these. We want more of you to invest in America. We're ready to welcome more of the jobs you help create, just as you're ready for American workers and customers to help you succeed globally. So I believe investing in the United States is the best business decision you can make.

And we also know that investment is always about the future. So as proud as we are about the lead in innovation we've developed over the last 8 years, we're running up the score. We're not resting on our laurels. Since 2014, we've opened eight cutting-edge manufacturing hubs: public-private partnerships that specialize in game-changing technologies like 3–D printing, photonics, the next-generation textiles. And today I'm proud to announce a ninth hub based in Los Angeles that will design smart sensors to make all types of manufacturing more efficient. And we've got more hubs on the way.

These institutes are new, but the innovators who are doing incredible things, they're who we've always been as Americans. Now, that's why near my desk, in the Oval Office, I keep models of great American patents like the Morse telegraph and the propeller blade, and the gear-cutting machine. And that's why I'm so proud of SelectUSA, which has proven to be a pretty good innovation and investment itself and one that I hope will endure—and I'm confident will endure—after Penny and I leave office.

Now, I also know that the longer I talk, the less time you have to make deals—[*laughter*]—with the folks that are sitting around you. So let me just remind you that this is not just about jobs and trade, it's not just about hard, cold cash. It's also about building relationships across borders.

When your companies come together, you help bring countries and cultures together. You generate greater understanding among peoples from different parts of the world. It's one of the most important things that you produce, and you should never underestimate its value. At a time when there is strong pushback in a lot of corners of the world against this process of globalization; at a time when, as I've argued here in the United States and overseas, when people are rightly concerned that that process of technology and innovation and globalization may be leaving some people behind; at a time when we have to be more mindful and attentive to the concerns of those who are not benefiting and seeing their wages and incomes go up as quickly as others; and at a time when the advanced economies in particular have to guard against a winner-take-all economy in which inequality grows—despite all those legitimate concerns that have to be addressed to give workers greater voice and to make sure that living wages are paid and working conditions are strong, what is also true is that the ability for us to trade and do business and to integrate our companies and people learning from each other and innovation spreading and connecting the globe promises prosperity and reductions in poverty and, ultimately, less likelihood of war and violence and conflict.

It is something that can help us advance all of our countries at the same time. It's something that we have to nurture and to value. The world is smaller than it used to be because of innovation, because of technology, because of globalization, because of global markets. And that is something that can work for everyone if we do it right. And that's been part of the premise of SelectUSA. When you select U.S.A., when you succeed, you'll help ensure that years from now, when the next generation asks itself about the best time to be in business, the best time to be a citizen of this world, they'll be happy to answer, in their own day, "right now."

So good luck. I'm rooting for you. Make a deal. And make that smart choice to invest in the United States of America. We are open for business.

God bless you. Thank you very much. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:30 p.m. in the International Ballroom at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Commerce Penny S. Pritzker;

and Vinai K. Thummalapally, Executive Director, SelectUSA initiative at the International Trade Administration, Department of Commerce.

Statement on World Refugee Day
June 20, 2016

Today, on World Refugee Day, we recognize the challenges and hardships that refugees face, honor their courage and resilience in the face of overwhelming obstacles, and celebrate their many valuable contributions to our Nation.

This year's commemoration comes as the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees reports that more people are displaced by rising violence, insecurity, and persecution than at any time on record. More than 65 million people around the world—more than the population of France, or California and Texas combined—have been driven from their homes. More than half are children. The scale of this human suffering is almost unimaginable; the need for the world to respond is beyond question.

Every day, members of the international community, humanitarian organizations, civil society, and individual citizens work to assist these vulnerable populations. For our part, the United States provides more humanitarian assistance to refugees than any other nation and maintains the world's largest refugee resettlement program. We support programs that provide food, water, shelter, and medical care to refugees and fight for their rights to safety, dignity, and long-term livelihood opportunities.

But responding to today's unprecedented challenge requires all of us to do more. In September, when world leaders meet for the U.N. General Assembly, I will convene a Leaders' Summit on Refugees. In advance of that summit, the United States is urging other governments to contribute more funding for humanitarian aid operations, to grant more refugees the chance to work and attend school, and to provide more resettlement opportunities for refugees who cannot safely go home or remain where they are. We are urging our non-governmental partners, including the private sector, to do more as well.

Even as our aid supports refugees thousands of miles from here, each day, countless Americans do their part to welcome and support refugees as they start life anew in the United States. The millions of refugees who have resettled here through the years have brought similar dreams of a better tomorrow. Each has enriched the diverse mosaic that is America. Their lives and their many accomplishments stand as a clear rebuke to the bigotry and brutality they fled and serve as a powerful example of the human will to endure, hope, and achieve.

Today we commemorate the spirit and strength of refugees worldwide and the dedication of those who help them on and after their journeys. Protecting and assisting refugees is a part of our history as a nation, and we will continue to alleviate the suffering of refugees abroad, and to welcome them here at home, because doing so reflects our American values and our noblest traditions as a nation, enriches our society, and strengthens our collective security.

NOTE: The statement referred to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to North Korea
June 21, 2016

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary

date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to North Korea that was declared in Executive Order 13466 of June 26, 2008, expanded in scope in Executive Order 13551 of August 30, 2010, addressed further in Executive Order 13570 of April 18, 2011, further expanded in scope in Executive Order 13687 of January 2, 2015, and under which additional steps were taken in Executive Order 13722 of March 15, 2016, is to continue in effect beyond June 26, 2016.

The existence and risk of proliferation of weapons-usable fissile material on the Korean Peninsula; the actions and policies of the Government of North Korea that destabilize the Korean Peninsula and imperil U.S. Armed Forces, allies, and trading partners in the region, including its pursuit of nuclear and missile programs; and other provocative, destabilizing, and repressive actions and policies of the Government of North Korea, continue to constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to North Korea.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 21, 2016.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Western Balkans
June 21, 2016

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the Western Balkans that was declared in Executive Order 13219 of June 26, 2001, is to continue in effect beyond June 26, 2016.

The threat constituted by the actions of persons engaged in, or assisting, sponsoring, or supporting (i) extremist violence in the Republic of Macedonia and elsewhere in the Western Balkans region, or (ii) acts obstructing implementation of the Dayton Accords in Bosnia and Herzegovina or United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 10, 1999, in Kosovo, has not been resolved. In addition, Executive Order 13219 was amended by Executive Order 13304 of May 28, 2003, to take additional steps with respect to acts obstructing implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement of 2001 relating to Macedonia.

Because the acts of extremist violence and obstructionist activity outlined in these Executive Orders are hostile to U.S. interests and continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to the Western Balkans.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 21, 2016.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Signing the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act

June 22, 2016

Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. To begin with, let me thank Lisa for the wonderful introduction. And her wonderful family is here. And I just want you to know that advocates like you, who fight every day to make this country a little bit better, are why we're here today. And we're very proud of you.

Back in the 1960s and seventies, Americans were becoming increasingly concerned with the fact that our natural resources and our communities and our health were threatened by pollution and toxins. And science backed it up. So, over the course of that decade, Republicans and Democrats in Congress came together again and again to produce landmark environmental victories: the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, the creation of the EPA. All of them have benefited this country greatly. And to be fair, all of them happened under the initiative and under the watch of a Republican President, Richard Nixon.

It made an enormous difference in people's lives. These days, my staff are too young to remember. [*Laughter*] I am not. [*Laughter*] I remember the first day I arrived in Los Angeles for college, and I had the bright idea of going for a jog. And after about 10 minutes, I was feeling this weird thing in my chest, and I was, like, am I asthmatic now, or what's the problem? And it turned out, it was on an alert day where you weren't supposed to be outside. So even in the late seventies, early eighties, for a lot of folks, it was just hard to breathe.

In Chicago, the river was polluted to the extent that people couldn't go in it. And this was true all around the country. And there was a transformation initiated by both parties that actually provided an outdoors that was safer and cleaner and better than what had existed a generation before. These regulations made a difference.

Now, another law, the Toxic Substance Control Act, was signed by President Ford, and it was a part of this broader environmental effort. Congress passed the law to protect Americans from harmful chemicals in the products that we buy: cleaning agents, fabrics, plastics, paint thinners. The idea was to make sure that the chemicals we use every day were safe and wouldn't lead to cancer or birth defects or reproductive problems.

But even with the best of intentions, the law didn't quite work the way it should have in practice. In 1976, some 62,000 chemicals were already on the market. But the law placed demands on the EPA that were so tough, so onerous, that it became virtually impossible to actually see if those chemicals were harming anybody.

In fact, out of those original 62,000 chemicals, only 5 have been banned. Five. And only a tiny percentage have even been reviewed for health and safety. The system was so complex, it was so burdensome, that our country hasn't even been able to uphold a ban on asbestos, a known carcinogen that kills as many as 10,000 Americans every year. And I think a lot of Americans would be shocked by all that.

There have been court cases. There has been litigation. But from a regulatory perspective, this was tough. And I think most Americans would expect that we could come together to fix this law and do a better job protecting the American people.

Well, here's the good news. That's exactly why we're here today. For the first time in 20 years, we are updating a national environmental statute. For the first time in our history, we'll actually be able to regulate chemicals effectively. And we're doing it in the same, overwhelmingly bipartisan fashion as happened with those pillars of legislation to protect our air and our water and our wildlife, the initiatives where Democrats and Republicans first came together to pass laws more than four decades ago. And that doesn't happen very often these days. So this is a really significant piece of business.

The Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety Act for the 21st Century will make it easier for the EPA to review chemicals already on the market, as well as the new chemicals our scientists and our businesses design. It will do away with an outdated bureaucratic formula to evaluate safety and instead focus solely on the risks to our health. And it will finally grant our scientists and our public servants at the EPA the funding they need to get the job done and keep us safe.

So this is a big deal. This is a good law. It is an important law. Here in America, folks should have the confidence to know that the laundry detergent we buy isn't going to make us sick, the mattresses our babies sleep on aren't going to harm them. And just like in the 1970s, when we decided to do something about smog that was choking our cities and our auto industry was able to innovate to make our cars cleaner; just like in the 1990s, when we had the problems with acid rain and our businesses figured out a way to do something about it and still keep growing and thriving—I'm absolutely confident that we can regulate toxic chemicals in a way that's both good for our families and ultimately good for business and our economy. Because nobody can innovate better than folks here in this country and our businesses.

In fact, we've got a lot of industry leaders here today who have pushed hard for this law, and I want to give them credit—from the American Chemical Council to S.C. Johnson—because they know that it gives them the certainty they need to keep outinnovating and outcompeting companies from other parts of the world. And the public health and environmental leaders who are [here]* today, from March of Dimes to the Environmental Defense Fund, know that this law will help protect Americans, especially those who are particularly vulnerable to chemicals, and that includes children and pregnant women and the elderly and poorer communities.

I have to say, this has been years in the making. You don't get all these people in the same room without a few late nights on Capitol Hill. [*Laughter*] I know there were times when folks questioned whether or not all the parties involved would be able to reach this agreement. I've been told that this process gave a lot of folks who worked on this law much greater appreciation for the zebrafish. [*Laughter*] But that's what public service is about: pushing through disagreements, forging compromise, especially when it's hard, and especially when it's about something as important as the health and safety of our kids and our families.

I want to especially to thank Bonnie Lautenberg, who's here. Bonnie carried the torch on this issue, cementing her late husband's legacy as one of our Nation's finest environmental champions. I had the great privilege of knowing Frank. I served with him. This bill was being worked on when I was on Frank's committee and Barbara's committee—in the environmental and energy committee—10 years ago. And it—and Frank was passionate about this. And those of you who knew Frank, he was passionate about a lot of things, especially Bonnie. [*Laughter*] But this bill may have come in a close second. And he was just a wonderful man. He was a great friend to me. For him to be able to see this legacy completed must be greatly satisfying. He's looking down on us and feeling pretty good right now. And Bonnie, who kept on pushing on this, I think, deserves enormous credit as well.

I also want to thank EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy and her whole team. They put a lot of technical work into making sure that this thing was going to be effective. It's now their task to implement it. We are very proud of them.

There are too many Members of Congress to name individually, but I just want to thank—everybody on this stage worked very, very hard to make this happen. There were countless staffers who pushed this across the finish line. And I want the American people to know that this is proof that even in the current polarized political climate here in Washington, things can work. It's possible. We can keep families safe and unleash the engine of American innovation. We

* White House correction.

can protect the planet and keep creating jobs. If we can get this bill done, it means that somewhere out there on the horizon, we can make our politics less toxic as well. [*Laughter*]

So this is a good day. And with that, I think it's time to sign the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act into law. Let's do it.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:34 a.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Franklin Township, NJ, resident Lisa Huguenin; and Sen. Barbara Boxer, ranking member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. H.R. 2576, approved June 22, was assigned Public Law No. 114–182.

Remarks on the Supreme Court's Decisions Regarding Affirmative Action and Immigration and an Exchange With Reporters
June 23, 2016

The President. Good morning, everybody. I wanted to say a few words on two of the cases the Supreme Court spoke on today.

First, in the affirmative action case, I'm pleased that the Supreme Court upheld the basic notion that diversity is an important value in our society and that this country should provide a high-quality education to all our young people, regardless of their background. We are not a country that guarantees equal outcomes, but we do strive to provide an equal shot to everybody. And that's what was upheld today.

Second, one of the reasons why America is such a diverse and inclusive nation is because we're a nation of immigrants. Our Founders conceived of this country as a refuge for the world. And for more than two centuries, welcoming wave after wave of immigrants has kept us youthful and dynamic and entrepreneurial. It has shaped our character, and it has made us stronger.

But for more than two decades now, our immigration system, everybody acknowledges, has been broken. And the fact that the Supreme Court wasn't able to issue a decision today doesn't just set the system back even further, it takes us further from the country that we aspire to be.

Just to lay out some basic facts that sometimes get lost in what can be an emotional debate. Since I took office, we've deployed more border agents and technology to our southern border than ever before. That has helped cut illegal border crossings to their lowest levels since the 1970s. It should have paved the way for comprehensive immigration reform. And in fact, as many of you know, it almost did. Nearly 70 Democrats and Republicans in the Senate came together to pass a smart, commonsense bill that would have doubled the Border Patrol and offered undocumented immigrants a pathway to earn citizenship if they paid a fine, paid their taxes, and played by the rules.

Unfortunately, Republicans in the House of Representatives refused to allow a simple yes-or-no vote on that bill. So I was left with little choice but to take steps within my existing authority to make our immigration system smarter, fairer, and more just.

Four years ago, we announced that those who are our lowest priorities for enforcement—diligent, patriotic young DREAMers who grew up pledging allegiance to our flag—should be able to apply to work here and study here and pay their taxes here. More than 730,000 lives have been changed as a result. These are students, they're teachers, they're doctors, they're lawyers. They're Americans in every way but on paper. And fortunately, today's decision does not affect this policy. It does not affect the existing DREAMers.

Two years ago, we announced a similar, expanded approach for others who are also low priorities for enforcement. We said that if you've been in America for more than 5 years, with children who are American citizens or

legal residents, then you, too, can come forward, get right with the law, and work in this country temporarily, without fear of deportation.

Both were the kinds of actions taken by Republican and Democratic Presidents over the past half-century. Neither granted anybody a free pass. All they did was focus our enforcement resources—which are necessarily limited—on the highest priorities: convicted criminals, recent border crossers, and threats to our national security.

Now, as disappointing as it was to be challenged for taking the kind of actions that other administrations have taken, the country was looking to the Supreme Court to resolve the important legal questions raised in this case. Today the Supreme Court was unable to reach a decision. This is part of the consequence of the Republican failure so far to give a fair hearing to Mr. Merrick Garland, my nominee to the Supreme Court. It means that the expanded set of commonsense deferred action policies—the ones that I announced 2 years ago—can't go forward at this stage, until there is a ninth justice on the Court to break the tie.

Now, I know a lot of people are going to be disappointed today, but it is important to understand what today means. The deferred action policy that has been in place for the last 4 years is not affected by this ruling. Enforcement priorities developed by my administration are not affected by this ruling. This means that the people who might have benefited from the expanded deferred action policies—long-term residents raising children who are Americans or legal residents—they will remain low priorities for enforcement. As long as you have not committed a crime, our limited immigration enforcement resources are not focused on you.

But today's decision is frustrating to those who seek to grow our economy and bring a rationality to our immigration system and to allow people to come out of the shadows and lift this perpetual cloud on them. I think it is heartbreaking for the millions of immigrants who've made their lives here, who've raised families here, who hoped for the opportunity to work, pay taxes, serve in our military, and more fully contribute to this country we all love in an open way.

So where do we go from here? Most Americans—including business leaders, faith leaders, and law enforcement, Democrats and Republicans and Independents—still agree that the single best way to solve this problem is by working together to pass commonsense, bipartisan immigration reform.

That is obviously not going to happen during the remainder of this Congress. We don't have a Congress that agrees with us on this. Nor do we have a Congress that's willing to do even its most basic of jobs under the Constitution, which is to consider nominations. Republicans in Congress currently are willfully preventing the Supreme Court from being fully staffed and functioning as our Founders intended. And today's situation underscores the degree to which the Court is not able to function the way it's supposed to.

The Court's inability to reach a decision in this case is a very clear reminder of why it's so important for the Supreme Court to have a full Bench. For more than 40 years, there's been an average of just over 2 months between a nomination and a hearing. I nominated Judge Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court more than 3 months ago. But most Republicans so far have refused so—to even meet with him. They are allowing partisan politics to jeopardize something as fundamental as the impartiality and integrity of our justice system. And America should not let it stand.

This is an election year. And during election years, politicians tend to use the immigration issue to scare people with words like "amnesty" in hopes that it will whip up votes. Keep in mind that millions of us, myself included, go back generations in this country, with ancestors who put in the painstaking effort to become citizens. And we don't like the notion that anyone might get a free pass to American citizenship. But here's the thing. Millions of people who have come forward and worked to get right with the law under this policy, they've been living here for years too, in some cases, even decades. So leaving the broken system

the way it is, that's not a solution. In fact, that's the real amnesty. Pretending we can deport 11 million people or build a wall without spending tens of billions of dollars of taxpayer money is abetting what is really just factually incorrect. It's not going to work. And it's not good for this country. It's a fantasy that offers nothing to help the middle class, and it demeans our tradition of being both a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

In the end, it is my firm belief that immigration is not something to fear. We don't have to wall ourselves off from those who may not look like us right now or pray like we do or have a different last name. Because being an American is about something more than that. What makes us America is our shared commitment to an ideal that all of us are created equal, all of us have a chance to make of our lives what we will. And every study shows that whether it was the Irish or the Poles or the Germans or the Italians or the Chinese or the Japanese or the Mexicans or the Kenyans—[*laughter*]—whoever showed up, over time, by a second generation, third generation, those kids are Americans. They do look like us, because we don't look one way. We don't all have the same last names, but we all share a creed, and we all share a commitment to the values that founded this Nation. That's who we are. And that is what I believe most Americans recognize.

So here's the bottom line. We've got a very real choice that America faces right now. We will continue to implement the existing programs that are already in place. We're not going to be able to move forward with the expanded programs that we wanted to move forward on, because the Supreme Court was not able to issue a ruling at this stage. And now we've got a choice about who we're going to be as a country, what we want to teach our kids, and how we want to be represented in Congress and in the White House.

We're going to have to make a decision about whether we are a people who tolerate the hypocrisy of a system where the workers who pick our fruit or make our beds never have the chance to get right with the law or whether we're going to give them a chance, just like our forebears had a chance, to take responsibility and give their kids a better future.

We're going to have to decide whether we're a people who accept the cruelty of ripping children from their parents' arms or whether we actually value families and keep them together for the sake of all of our communities.

We're going to have to decide whether we're a people who continue to educate the world's brightest students in our high schools and universities, only to then send them away to compete against us, or whether we encourage them to stay and create new jobs and new businesses right here in the United States.

These are all the questions that voters now are going to have to ask themselves and are going to have to answer in November. These are the issues that are going to be debated by candidates across the country, both congressional candidates as well as the Presidential candidates. And in November, Americans are going to have to make a decision about what we care about and who we are.

I promise you this though: Sooner or later, immigration reform will get done. Congress is not going to be able to ignore America forever. It's just—it's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when. And I can say that with confidence because we've seen our history. We get these spasms of politics around immigration and fearmongering, and then our traditions and our history and our better impulses kick in. That's how we all ended up here. Because I guarantee you, at some point, every one of us has somebody in our background who people didn't want coming here, and yet here we are.

And that's what's going to happen this time. Now, the question is, do we do it in a smart, rational, sensible way, or we just keep on kicking the can down the road? I believe that this country deserves an immigration policy that reflects the goodness of the American people. And I think we're going to get that. Hopefully, we're going to get that in November.

All right. I'll take two questions.

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Two questions. Go ahead.

Immigration Policy

Q. Thank you. Realistically, what do you see is the risk of deportation for these more than 4 million people? I mean, you say we can't deport 11 million. This is 4 million, and there's a chunk of time here before something else——

The President. Well, let me just be very clear. What was unaffected by today's ruling—or lack of a ruling—is the enforcement priorities that we've put in place. And our enforcement priorities that have been laid out by Secretary Jeh Johnson at the Department of Homeland Security are pretty clear: We prioritize criminals, we prioritize gangbangers, we prioritize folks who have just come in. What we don't do is to prioritize people who have been here a long time, who are otherwise law abiding, who have roots and connections in their communities. And so those enforcement priorities will continue.

The work that we've done with the "DREAM Act" kids, those policies remain in place. So what this has prevented us from doing is expanding the scope of what we've done with the "DREAM Act" kids. Keep in mind though that even that was just a temporary measure. All it was doing was basically saying to these kids, you can have confidence that you are not going to be deported, but it does not resolve your ultimate status. That is going to require congressional action.

So although I'm disappointed by the lack of a decision today by the Supreme Court, a deadlock, this does not substantially change the status quo, and it doesn't negate what has always been the case, which is if we're really going to solve this problem effectively, we've got to have Congress pass a law.

I have pushed to the limits of my executive authority. We now have to have Congress act. And hopefully, we're going to have a vigorous debate during this election—this is how democracy is supposed to work—and there will be a determination as to which direction we go in.

As I said, over the long term, I'm very confident about the direction this country will go in, because we've seen this in the past. But—if we hadn't seen it in the past, America would look very different than it looks today. But whether we're going to get this done now, soon, so that this does not continue to be this divisive force in our politics and we can get down to the business of all pulling together to create jobs and educate our kids and protect ourselves from external threats and do the things that we need to do to ensure a better future for the next generation, that's going to be determined in part by how voters turn out and who they vote for in November.

All right. One more question. Go ahead, Mike [Mike Dorning, Bloomberg News].

Immigration Policy/The President's Executive Authority/Judicial Confirmation Process

Q. Two practical, going-forward questions. Number one, is this going to—are you going to be able to do anything more at all for immigrants going forward in terms of executive action before the election of the next President? And number two, do you in any way take this as some Republicans have presented this, as a slap at your use of executive authority, this tie vote? And will this in any way circumscribe how aggressively or forcefully you use executive authority in the remainder of your time in office?

The President. Okay. I—on the specifics of immigration, I don't anticipate that there are additional executive actions that we can take. We can implement what we've already put in place that is not affected by this decision. But we have to follow now what has been ruled on in the Fifth Circuit because the Supreme Court could not resolve the issue.

And we're going to have to abide by that ruling until an election and a confirmation of a ninth Justice of the Supreme Court so that they can break this tie. Because we've always said that we are going to do what we can lawfully through executive action, but we can't go beyond that. And we've butted up about as far as we can on this particular topic.

It does not have any impact on, from our perspective, on the host of other issues that we're working on, because each one of these issues has a different analysis and is based on

different statutes or different interpretations of our authority.

So, for example, on climate change, that's based on the Clean Air Act and the EPA and previous Supreme Court rulings, as opposed to a theory of prosecutorial discretion that, in the past, has—every other President has exercised. And the Supreme Court wasn't definitive one way or the other on this. I mean, the problem is, they don't have a ninth justice. So that will continue to be a problem.

With respect to the Republicans, I think what it tells you is, is that if you keep on blocking judges from getting on the bench, then courts can't issue decisions. And what that means is, then, you're going to have the status quo frozen, and we're not going to be able to make progress on some very important issues.

Now, that may have been their strategy from the start. But it's not a sustainable strategy. And it's certainly a strategy that will be broken by this election, unless their basic theory is, is that we will never confirm judges again. Hopefully, that's not their theory, because that's not how our democracy is designed.

The President's Executive Authority

Q. But you reject their portrayal of this as a chastisement of you for your use of executive authority?

The President. It was a one-word opinion that said, we can't come up with a decision. I think that would be a little bit of a stretch, yes. Maybe the next time they can—if we have a full Court issuing a full opinion on anything, then we take it seriously. This we have to abide by, but it wasn't any kind of value statement or a decision on the merits on these issues.

All right? Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:53 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of the President's prepared remarks.

Remarks and a Panel Discussion at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit at Stanford University in Stanford, California
June 24, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody. Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. Thank you so much. Well, this is a good-looking group. Thank you.

Well, first of all, let me thank President Hennessy for the introduction, and the entire Stanford family for letting us take over the campus for a few days. As some of you know, John is stepping down after 16 years as president of Stanford. Fortunately for me, I cannot do that, to just stick around longer than my term limit. John, I'm sure there are some people who want you to stick around longer, but I've—I'm confident that you're going to do extraordinary things. And we could not be prouder of John Hennessy and Stanford and all the great work that they have done. So please give him a big round of applause.

Now, it's summer break. Just so all of you know, Stanford is not always this quiet. This school is unique. Folks ride on bicycles everywhere. [*Laughter*] And athletes are also computer engineers. This is the place that made "nerd" cool. [*Laughter*] So we are thrilled to be here.

I know that I am not the first speaker that you've heard from. But many of you have traveled here from a long ways. We've got more than 170 countries from every region of the world represented. Some of you, this is the first time you are visiting our country. So let me just say, on behalf of the American people, not only welcome to our Global Entrepreneurship Summit, but welcome to the United States of America. We are glad to have you.

United Kingdom's European Union Membership Referendum

I am not going to give a long speech, because what I really want to do is have a

conversation with some outstanding young people who are part of our panel and we're going to introduce in a moment. But I do want to begin by offering some opening thoughts about the time in which we gather here today. And I'm going to start with the British people's decision to leave the European Union, the vote that took place yesterday.

Just a few hours ago, I spoke with Prime Minister David Cameron. David has been an outstanding friend and partner on the global stage. And based on our conversation, I'm confident that the U.K. is committed to an orderly transition out of the EU. We agreed that our economic and financial teams will remain in close contact as we stay focused on ensuring economic growth and financial stability. I then spoke to Chancellor Merkel of Germany, and we agreed that the United States and our European allies will work closely together in the weeks and months ahead.

I do think that yesterday's vote speaks to the ongoing changes and challenges that are raised by globalization. But while the U.K.'s relationship with the EU will change, one thing that will not change is the special relationship that exists between our two nations. That will endure. The EU will remain one of our indispensable partners. Our NATO alliance will remain a cornerstone of global security. And in a few weeks, we'll be meeting in Warsaw for the NATO summit. And our shared values—including our commitment to democracy and pluralism and opportunity for all people in a globalized world—that will continue to unite all of us. And that is the work that brings us here today.

Global Entrepreneurship

The world has shrunk. It is interconnected. All of you represent that interconnection. Many of you are catalyzing it and accelerating it. It promises to bring extraordinary benefits. But it also has challenges. And it also evokes concerns and fears. And so part of why this Global Entrepreneurship Summit has been so close to my heart, something that I've been so committed to, is because I believe all of you represent all the upside of an interconnected world, all the optimism and the hope and the opportunity that that interconnected world represents.

But it's also important in these discussions to find ways in which we are expanding and broadening the benefits of that interconnection to more and more people. And that's what so many of you are doing.

We're gathered here at Stanford, in the heart of Silicon Valley, which is one of the great hubs of innovation and entrepreneurship not just for America, but for the world. This is a place that celebrates our ability as human beings to discover and learn and to build, to question, to reimagine, to create new ways to connect and work with each other.

It's where two guys in a garage, Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard, launched a global company; where student projects became Yahoo! and Google. Those were really good student projects. [*Laughter*] My student projects weren't as good. [*Laughter*] It's where entrepreneurs like so many of you get an idea, and you build a team, and you work to turn it into reality, and you launch products and companies and entire industries that transform the world. That's the power of entrepreneurship. And it's never been more important.

In today's world, where our economies have undergone dramatic shifts, where businesses don't stop at borders, where technology and automation have transformed virtually every industry and changed how people organize and work, entrepreneurship remains the engine of growth. That ability to turn an idea into a reality—a new venture, a small business—that creates good-paying jobs; it puts rising economies on the path to prosperity, and empowers people to come together and tackle our most pressing global problems, from climate change to poverty.

When people can start their own businesses, it helps individuals and families succeed. It can make whole communities more prosperous and more secure. It offers a positive path for young people seeking the chance to make something of themselves and can empower people who have previously been locked out of the existing social order—women and minori-

ties, others who aren't part of the "old boys" network—give them a chance to contribute and to lead. And it can create a culture where innovation and creativity are valued, where we don't just look at the way things have always been, but rather we say, how could things be? Why not? Let's make something new.

This spirit speaks to something deep inside of all of us, no matter who we are, what we look like, where we come from. You look out across this auditorium, you're all of different backgrounds and cultures and races and religions. Some of you are from teeming cities; others are working in small rural villages. But you have that same spark, that same creative energy to come up with innovative solutions to old challenges. And entrepreneurship is what gives people like you a chance to fulfill your own dreams and create something bigger than yourselves.

We live in a time when more than half the world is under the age of 30. And that means we've got to make sure that all of our young people around the world have the tools they need to start new ventures and to create the jobs of the 21st century and to help lift up entire populations. And so many of you are already doing this. As I travel around the world, one of the extraordinary things that I have the opportunity to do is to meet young people in every region and to see the problem-solving and the energy and optimism that they're bringing to everything from how to generate electricity in environmentally sound ways in remote places that are off the grid right now, to how do you employ women in remote areas who all too often have been locked out of opportunity. You just see enormous creativity waiting to be tapped.

And part of our job, part of this summit's job, is to make sure that we're putting more tools, more resources into the hands of these folks who are changing the world and making sure that all of you know each other so that you can share best practices and ideas and spread the word.

Now, I know that the daily reality is not always as romantic as all this. [*Laughter*] It turns out that starting your own business is not easy. You have to have access to capital. You have to meet the right people. You have to have mentors who can guide you as you get your idea off the ground. And that can be especially difficult for women and young people and minorities and others who haven't always had access to the same networks and opportunities. You deserve the same chance to succeed as everybody else. We've got to make sure that everybody has a fair shot to reach their potential. We can't leave more than half the team on the bench.

That's why we've invested so much time and effort to make sure that America is helping to empower entrepreneurs like you. So we held our first summit back in 2010. Since then, we've brought entrepreneurs like you together in Turkey and the Emirates and Malaysia, Morocco, Kenya. And all told, we've helped more than 17,000 entrepreneurs and innovators connect with each other, access capital, find mentors, and start new ventures—17,000.

So I think of the Tanzanian startup that helps farmers reduce their harvest losses or the company in Nepal that's helping to improve charity health care. There are 11 Cubans who are here today, the first Cubans to join us at one of these summits. [*Applause*] *Hola! Mucho gusto.* They're ready to help create new opportunities for the Cuban people. Where are they? [*Applause*] There they are.

I want to thank Antonio Gracias, a leader in private equity and one of our Presidential Ambassadors for Global Entrepreneurship, because his support was critical in bringing these young Cuban entrepreneurs here. So that's deserving of a hand.

I'm also pleased to announce that we have a new group of business leaders signing on as entrepreneurship ambassadors. This is something that we started as part of the summit, and they have put their time, energy, effort, and in some cases, their money behind entrepreneurs around the world. So some of our new ambassadors: Sara Blakely, CEO of Spanx; Jane Wurwand, CEO of Dermalogica; Steven Jurvetson, partner at Draper Fisher Jurvetson; and Patrick Collison, CEO of Stripe.

Now, supporting entrepreneurs isn't just something we do around the world, it's also a

key part of how we create jobs and fuel innovation here in the United States. And it's why we're working with communities to streamline the process for launching a company: "Startup in a Day." It's why we're expanding Innovation Corps, our program to equip more scientists and engineers with entrepreneurial skills. And it's why, at this summit, dozens of top tech companies, from giants to startups, are committing to make their technology workforces look like America, including by publishing data on diversity each year and developing the tech talent of people from all backgrounds. We're very happy for the commitments that they've made, so give them a big round of applause for that.

Here at this summit, we're also building on our progress with new commitments from government and business and philanthropists. So at last year's Paris climate talks, for example, Bill Gates and other top global investors committed to partnering with governments to invest in cutting-edge clean energy solutions. Today we're launching an initiative to connect some of these global investors and others with clean energy entrepreneurs from developing countries.

We're also announcing the Young Transatlantic Innovation Leaders Initiative, which will bring 200 of Europe's innovators to the United States each year to develop their skills. And we've got organizations like Endeavor, which supports entrepreneurs, starting a $100 million fund to invest in companies across Latin America and the Middle East, in Africa, and Southeast Asia. Investment firms like Capria Ventures, which will help fund international startups. So these are just a handful of the commitments—and I suspect, new ventures—that are going to come out of this year's summit.

So all of you budding entrepreneurs, don't be shy while you're here. Talk to the experts. Make your pitch. Network with potential investors. Find that mentor who might help you navigate through a tough patch. Connect with your fellow innovators. Because ultimately the world needs your creativity and your energy and your vision. You are going to be what helps this process of global integration work in a way that is good for everyone and not just some.

Now, I've spoken about this before. I believe we are better off in a world in which we are trading and networking and communicating and sharing ideas. But that also means that cultures are colliding, and sometimes, it's disruptive, and people get worried. You're the bridge, you're the glue—particularly the young people who are here—who can help lead towards a more peaceful and more prosperous future that provides opportunity for everybody.

And because this is about more than just this one event—or for that matter, this one President—we're going to make sure that the United States continues to help developing the next generation of entrepreneurs. We are very proud to announce that next year's Global Entrepreneurship Summit will be hosted in India.

Audience members. Woo! [*Applause*]

The President. [*Laughter*] Got the Indian contingent in the house. I'll try to stop by if I'm invited. [*Laughter*]

But the point is, I believe in you, and America believes in you. And we believe that you have the talent and the skills and the ambition not just to pursue your dreams, but to realize them; that you can lift up not just your own families, but communities and countries, and create opportunity and prosperity and hope for decades to come. That's the promise that we see in all of you.

And that is the promise that we see in our outstanding panelists that you're going to hear from. Mai Medhat, of Egypt, who is a software engineer, who started a company called Eventtus, which is a one-stop online shop for people who organize events; Jean Bosco Nzeyimana, of Rwanda, who is the founder and CEO of HABONA Limited, a company that uses biomass and waste to develop eco-friendly fuels that are used in rural Africa; Mariana Costa Checa, of Peru. Mariana is the founder of Laboratoria, which gives young women from low-income backgrounds the education and tools they need to work in the digital sector.

And if that lineup is not enough, you also see it in a guy that you may have heard of who has

done pretty well for himself, the founder and CEO of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg.

They're the real experts. Let's welcome them on stage, and we'll start having a conversation with them. Thank you.

All right. This is a good-looking group. [*Laughter*] And I could not wear a T-shirt like Mark—[*laughter*]—for at least another 6 months, but I will take off my jacket so that I don't look too formal.

Facebook, Inc., Founder and Chief Executive Officer Mark E. Zuckerberg. Soon. Soon.

Entrepreneurship Promotion Efforts

The President. Soon. It's going to happen soon. The—so——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes, sit down, everybody. The—relax. [*Laughter*] So these are some extraordinary entrepreneurs. Some are just getting started, some seem to be moving along pretty well. [*Laughter*] And—but I thought this was wonderfully representative because it's from different regions of the world, it's companies that are at different stages.

And maybe we can just start by having everybody introduce themselves, describe a little bit about what they're doing. And then, we can sort of have a discussion about what's been easy, what's been hard, how can government policy like the U.S. Government policy help in advancing some of these issues. How can other countries' governments—because we have 20 representatives from other governments participating in this summit—how should they think about encouraging entrepreneurship. And then, most importantly, how can other businesses and venture capital, et cetera, think about some of these international opportunities.

So, Mai, why don't we start with you? And tell us—I was hearing some of the great work you're doing. Tell us more about it.

Eventtus Cofounder and Chief Executive Officer Mai Medhat. Thank you. [*Laughter*] It's so great to be here. [*Laughter*] I started—I'm software engineer. I have an engineering background. And one day, I heard that the first Startup Weekend is happening in Cairo. And I was not invited, but I went anyway with my friend.

The President. Good for you.

Ms. Medhat. [*Laughter*] I went with my friend Nihal. She was invited, and we—she turned out to be my cofounder. And we were there just to learn about startups, meet mentors and other entrepreneurs.

And—but it was very hard to network and meet people during the event. We felt like there was a gap between the organizers and the attendees. And then, a week after, we attended TEDxCairo, and we had the same experience. We felt like there should be a better way for organizers to organize events and for the attendees to experience events.

Everyone is there for networking, connecting people, and sharing experience. So we did our research, and we were very passionate about the idea. We felt like we can do something in the event space. So we quit our jobs, and we started working on this full time before even having the name Eventtus. And now we have a full engagement and networking platform for events. It's a very interactive app with 86-percent engagement in most of our events. So we are helping people getting together during events. And now we have a great team, two offices: in Cairo and Dubai. And we are working with most of events in our region.

When I look back on the journey, it wasn't easy at all. It was very challenging. It was very exciting as well. But it was full of ups and downs. And we started before even the first accelerator in Egypt was started. We had few mentors back then. But now we have a number of amazing startups, a number of mentors and support organizations who are working together to build the ecosystem. So I can see it's—the ecosystem has grown very well, but we still have a lot to do.

The President. That's great.

Ms. Medhat. Thank you.

The President. Thank you. Jean Bosco.

HABONA Ltd. Founder and Chief Executive Officer Jean Bosco Nzeyimana. Thank you. It's an honor to be here.

So when I was growing up in the rural villages in Rwanda, I used to spend countless hours

in the forest collecting firewood for my parents and fetching water. And that was not just me, but dozens of other children in Africa are facing the same challenges. They are involved in laborious activities to help their parents just to prepare their meal, instead of going to school.

So as I was growing up, I kept thinking about something that I can do to help these families have access to other alternative fuels that they can use to replace charcoal wood that they have been using for many years. So I came up with an idea of an integrated waste management approach, whereby we collect waste, and then we turn them into affordable and environmentally friendly products in form of briquettes and biogas that the people can then use. And that is like a green cooking fuel, which can improve health and sanitations in homes.

As we started, it has been 2 years, and I have employed more than 25 people, giving them permanent jobs. And we are trying to expand to other areas of the country so that we can continue to improve sanitation, as well as providing these kind of alternative fuels, which can improve health and mitigate climate change in the country and Africa in general.

The President. Excellent. Mariana.

Laboratoria Cofounder and Executive Director Mariana Costa Checa. It's an honor to be here. I'm still trying to get over the fact that you just introduced me. [*Laughter*] I'm so happy.

So I did Laboratoria. We are a social enterprise. And we—I started it in Peru 2 years ago. We are now in Peru and Chile and Mexico. And what we tried to do is to go out and find talent where nobody else is looking for it. So we tried to identify young women who haven't been able to access quality education or job opportunities because of economic limitations and train them to become the most awesome web developers they can be and connect them with employment opportunities in the tech sector.

Something that I realized is that when our students join our program, they are—most of them are completely unaware of their potential, and they come thinking that it's going to be really hard to break this vicious cycle of low-skilled employment, underpaid employment, or just domestic work. But they soon start learning to code, and it's just such a powerful skill set. They—a few weeks into the program, they start building their first websites, their first apps, their games, and showing them to the world. And it's so empowering. And 6 months after joining, they're ready to go out and join the workforce.

So we have students who get three job offers from the coolest companies in town. They go out, they get to decide where they want to go and work. They triple their income, so they significantly improve their economic circumstances. They start supporting their families. And I think, most importantly, they start realizing that anything is possible if they work hard enough for it, no? And we have students that have gone from working at a corner shop in a slum to working at the IDB in Washington as developers, a few blocks from the White House. So really, they are an example that anything is possible, no?

And they're changing not only their lives, but they're changing their communities, their cities. And I think they are transforming the tech sector in Latin America. They are bringing the diversity and the talent that the sector needs to really become a leading force in our economies. And I'm pretty sure that as we continue to grow and reach thousands of women in the region, they are going to change our countries for the better, and making sure that we can actually base our growth on the most important thing that we have; that's our young talent.

The President. That's great. Now, the—should—[*applause*]. When we were talking backstage, I had been reading about this, and I said, 60 percent of the women who had gone through this program now were employed. And I was corrected: It's now 70 percent. I had old data. [*Laughter*] But I think it's important to point out that your success rate has been quite extraordinary already. So it's wonderful.

Ms. Costa Checa. Thank you.

Global Entrepreneurship

The President. Mark, when the—there was a time when you were sort of in their shoes. And—[*laughter*]. But now, obviously, Facebook's success has been extraordinary. But I'm sure that you still can connect with the stories that are told here, and some of the stories out there. How is Facebook thinking about its own role in creating this platform for entrepreneurship around the world? I know that's something that you've been thinking a lot about.

Mr. Zuckerberg. Well, it's really inspiring to be here with so many great entrepreneurs and to hear about all the work that you're doing, and it's an honor. So thanks for having me.

To me, entrepreneurship is about creating change, not just creating companies. And the most effective entrepreneurs that—who I've met care deeply about some mission and some change that they're trying to create. And often, they don't even start because they're trying to create a company.

Right? And that's how I think about my connection to all of us here, is when I was getting started, I wanted—I cared deeply about giving everyone a voice, right, and giving people the tools to share everything that they cared about and bringing a community together. And it started small in one university. And I didn't think it was going to be company at the time. As a matter of fact, I was pretty convinced that at some point someone would build something like this for the world, but I thought that that would be some other company that already had thousands of engineers and was used to building stuff for hundreds of millions of people around the world.

And what ended up happening was that no one built it, right, so we just kind of kept on going. [*Laughter*] Right? I mean, people said at each step along the way, what you're doing, all right, maybe college students like it, but no one else is going to like it and there's not going to be any money in doing this. So, all right, you only really do it if you care, right, if you're passionate about doing it.

And then, it started growing, and people said it would be fad and it would never be a good business. But you keep going because you care, not because you're trying to create a business.

And then, there's the shift to mobile where people thought that it wouldn't be a sustainable business. And it—through each of these things, the entrepreneurs who I think build things that last for a long time keep going because they care fundamentally about the change that they're trying to create in the world. And they're not in it just to build a company.

And I carry that with me today. So today, we have—we live in a world with more than 7 billion people, but more than 4 billion of us are not on the Internet. And we talk about having an equal opportunity to be able to create a change in the world, and I think that's a really hard thing to do if you don't have access to some of the basic infrastructure and technical tools that are necessary to build this kind of—these kinds of technical products.

So I, kind of, think about what we're doing today very similarly to how I thought about where we were at the beginning. It's—I get people all the time who come to me and say, all right, well, you're investing billions of dollars in trying to put Internet connectivity in places where we don't get paid for it. It's not something that we'll make any money from for a very long period of time, if it works out. But it's this deep belief that you're trying to make a change. You're trying to connect people in the world. And I really do believe that if you do something good and if you help people out, then eventually, some portion of that good will come back to you.

And you may not know up front what it's going to be, but that's just been the guiding principle for me in the work that we've done. And I hope that some of the work that we do can play a role in empowering you and so many more entrepreneurs to build the next great companies.

Challenges Faced by Entrepreneurs

The President. Excellent.

So for the three budding entrepreneurs, you've already had some success and positive

feedback. But I know that this is still hard sometimes and frustrating. And let's go back to the earlier question that I asked: What do you find to be some of the biggest hurdles for your success? And are there policies that either your governments could be pursuing or that the United States, in conjunction with your governments, could be pursuing that would really make this process, if not easy, then at least a little bit smoother? And are there questions or concerns that you have in terms of how more established businesses like Facebook, how they might be able to interact with startups like yours?

So why don't we—we'll go in reverse order this time. Why don't we start with you?

Ms. Costa Checa. Yes, so I think there's been many challenges along the way. In our case, we try to disrupt many preconceptions, I think. So at the beginning, many people were, like, how are you going to train people in months and get them a job? How are you going to get young women who went to a public high school that's not very good to actually become competitive in the labor market?

And I think, luckily, we've overcome those, and we've proved that they are incredibly talented, that you can learn in months instead of years.

The President. Right.

Ms. Costa Checa. And most of the companies that hire our developers actually rehire. So they realize that they're great, and they're as competitive as anyone else who comes from a different background. So I think that's been very, very encouraging in—on our way.

And I mean, the little secret that I have, I think, being a social entrepreneur is that motivation is everything, you know? And when we—when there's bad times, and where we are not making the end of the month to pay all our people, and when we're facing all these challenges, I usually just go into the classroom. You know? I'm like, okay, let me go into the classroom, and I talk to the girls who study with us. And it's just, they are the main force behind not only myself, but all my team—my partners and all my team—because they are fighting so hard to making it happen. They are traveling—sometimes, commuting 4 hours a day to come and go back. They are—they have on top of their studies a lot of domestic responsibilities, and they're proving that it can be done. So that's always a reality check to say, you know I have everything I need to keep going at this.

The President. Good. Jean Bosco.

Mr. Nzeyimana. Great, I think one of the most—biggest challenges that I have faced was because I started this company very young. At that time, I was 19 years old, and in my culture, it is believed that those great initiatives are started by old people and those things which have been difficult for other people cannot be possible for young people.

So I tried to disrupt that status quo, and I created this company. But of course, during that period, no one was even trusting me so that they can be my employee, so I had to be my own marketer. I had to be the technical boss. I had to be everything in the company so that I can build that kind of a first impression so that I can impress a few people to come to me and help me run this cause.

And the other challenge that we were facing is that a lot of financial institutions didn't even know what we were talking about because this is—these are the kind of renewable energy that we wanted to bring to Rwanda. And you would find a lot of folks working in banks asking you, what are you trying to do? Because they don't even understand what you are doing. It was, like, very difficult for them to analyze and calculate the risk that might be involved in the activities that we're trying to do.

But because I trusted in my solution and this kind of thing that I wanted to do to my community, I kept pushing, applying for different competitions. And luckily, I won the United States African Development Foundation grant to start this initiative.

And when I started, people started to see how you can take advantage on ways that you already have to produce some products which can then go back in communities and be solutions which can improve lives of many people. And then, from there, people started coming.

But the lesson that I learned from that very basic experience is that no matter what you are

trying to do—necessary is that you are having the kind of motive in your mind that you want to help your society move forward. So the policies and the other partners take hold as we come along the way to help you run that initiative. But that will happen once you start. If you don't start, no one will come and join you.

Challenges Faced by Entrepreneurs

The President. Good. The—so we've heard—no, it's interesting, I mean, part of what the two of you have described, is first of all, each country has its own culture and there are going to be sometimes some cultural barriers, whether it's attitudes about women and what they can do, whether it's attitudes about young people and how seriously they take a young person. Mark had to deal with that a little bit. But here, obviously, in the United States, and particularly in Silicon Valley, I think that's begun to change.

But there's also just basic issues like financing and having access to capital, particularly when it's a new idea and it doesn't fit the existing models that the banks or other financial institutions may have.

Mai, what—do those kinds of challenges resonate in your experience?

Ms. Medhat. Definitely.

The President. And how did you navigate through those?

Ms. Medhat. Yes, definitely. Like, I think all the entrepreneurs, like everywhere in the world, we share the same challenges. I think I did almost every single mistake that you read about in every startup-related book. [*Laughter*] I learned everything the hard way. So yes, it's a learning process.

It's a—funding was one of the challenges, of course. The other one was the legal system and the legal structure, especially in Egypt. It's not startup friendly. So you have to do all of the work-arounds, and you have to be persistent to get over that, building a team as well. And, like, I'm a woman. And I started—I was young.

The President. You're still young, I think.

Ms. Medhat. Yes. [*Laughter*]

The President. I think you qualify as young.

Ms. Medhat. So yes, I had almost the same challenges. It's—I would say that the only thing that keeps us going is believing in our idea, believing that we can do something, we can add value to people's life. And this is the only thing that keeps me—woke every day in the morning and go to work. So——

U.S. Entrepreneurship Promotion Efforts/Global Entrepreneurship

The President. Yes. Well look, all of you just are expressing what Mark said, which is, it starts with a passion. If you start off just saying I want to make money, but there's no clear mission in—behind it, then when you start hitting some of these barriers, sometimes, it's very hard to push through them.

With respect to some of the barriers that you're talking about, the U.S.—in connection to the Entrepreneurship Summit, what we've been trying to do is take best practices and learn lessons about what's working and what's not. And so in the grants that we're providing or the training that we're providing, what these summits have been really useful in doing is hearing directly from entrepreneurs and say this program doesn't work as well as it could; this one works really well.

What we're also trying to do, though, is encourage governments to listen and hear from entrepreneurs to build a different kind of culture.

So the point you made, Mai, about how hard is it to get a business started? Right? How much paperwork do you have to fill out? What kinds of fees do you have to pay? How much bureaucracy do you have to sort through?

That's something that here in the United States, we've had to deal with ourselves. And what we've tried to do is to both simplify processes, but also use technology in ways that means you don't have to travel across town in Cairo to go to an office, and the person you need to see isn't there, and then you have to travel back and reschedule the next day. And the traffic is terrible, and you're—it's driving you crazy. If you can go on the net and do a lot of that work ahead of time that can make a

huge difference in accelerating the process that you're doing.

And so I'm very glad that we have 20 countries represented here, because part of what we're doing is getting commitments from those other countries to say, we're going to learn from each other and figure out how we can streamline these efforts so that we're making life a little bit easier for young people like you.

Ms. Medhat. Yes, actually, back when we started, we didn't know where to start from. Like we couldn't find any information online, for example, on how to get the company registered in Egypt. We didn't know any startup lawyers or anyone who can register the company for us. So we had to go ourselves and ask for help from other people.

The President. Right.

Ms. Medhat. And we couldn't find any information. It took us so much time, efforts, and money.

U.S. Entrepreneurship Promotion Efforts

The President. Yes. Well, even here in the United States where it's much easier to do business, we have—we still have 16 agencies that are in charge of doing business. [*Laughter*] We've tried to streamline them into one. It requires congressional action. [*Laughter*] So the—so at least, what we've tried to do is to consolidate the websites so that it's easier to get the information, even though you still have to deal potentially with 16 different agencies for different needs.

So there are specific things that the government can do to be more entrepreneur friendly. How can companies like Facebook or Google or some of the venture funds that are represented here, how should they think about finding good ideas? What sorts of mentorship or training would you find most helpful? Obviously, having experienced entrepreneurs or people who have seen startups in the past maybe can help you avoid a few of the lessons. And part of the goal of the summit here is to build these networks so that that kind of mentorship is available.

But, Mark, I know that Facebook is already doing some of these issues. Tell us about some of the things that you're excited about. And then, maybe we hear from them about other networking opportunities that they'd be looking for.

Mr. Zuckerberg. Sure. Well, we have a developer program all over the world, where we go around—and it's called FbStart. And we give entrepreneurs free access to tools, and some of them—a lot of the tools that people can use are free from Facebook and other places. But in order to help get started with businesses, we give to different companies tens of thousands of dollars' worth of Facebook tools to get started.

But it's also important to help people learn how to use the tools, so we do these entrepreneurship workshops around the world and—for both people who are starting to create technical companies, but also for small businesses, which are, I think, an important part—maybe less the focus of this summit—but that's a huge part of what we try to do around the world and help people get on the Internet and connect with people that they're trying to sell their products to. And we have more than 50 million small-business pages that are on Facebook, and a large number of them use it as their primary presence for communicating with people and attracting new customers. So that's a pretty good basic tool that's out there.

The biggest thing that I'm personally focused on is connectivity though. I mean, it's—I think for you guys—and we talked about this a little bit backstage—I think you're mostly in places that have reasonable connectivity. I mean, you were talking about how sometimes, when you go home, it's not so good, but in general, I think for a whole other big population, wave of folks, this really is a blocking factor. Right? If you grew up and you've never used a computer or you've never had access to the Internet, it's often hard to even imagine what you're missing out on.

And so I—this is a local problem that I think we need to do a better job of empowering folks in different countries to be able to spread connectivity. I mean, this isn't something that the U.S. or some American company can come in and do. In the places where it's worked, it's

been in partnership with local companies and local entrepreneurs and local governments.

And that's also something that I'd love your guys' advice on: how you think we could be doing a better job of spreading connectivity to enable not just you guys, but other entrepreneurs who haven't even had the opportunities that you have had to build things as well.

Latin American Entrepreneurship

The President. Well, tell us what's happening in Peru in terms of connectivity, and how does that connect with creating the supply for all these wonderful young women that you're training? Obviously, things are growing.

Ms. Costa Checa. Yes, yes, yes.

The President. But speak to Mark's point about how you see things unfolding both in Peru and Latin America over the next several years.

Ms. Costa Checa. Yes. We'll, first of all, it—Facebook is such an amazing tool for us because we often target women who have had limited access to the digital world as a whole, but no matter where you go, Facebook is there. [*Laughter*] I think young people today initiate their digital lives through Facebook. So every single girl in our program, even though they don't have e-mail and they have a limited use of the Internet, they have a Facebook account. And——

The President. Well, Mark is very happy to hear this. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Zuckerberg. I am. I am.

Ms. Costa Checa. Yes. And this is a great connection because it's a starting point, you know. And we usually start on our events where we do awareness raising about our program and encourage young women to apply, we talk a lot about Facebook, because this is a web app and do you know what's behind it. And that's actually a very important thread in our communication. So thank you. It helps a lot.

And in terms of connectivity, I think Latin America is—I mean, it's moving forward, but there are still many important challenges. And as we were discussing before, the service is not often the best because there is very few companies in the market, and this brings some challenges, no? And we also have—I mean, many, many of the Latin American countries are very centralized in the capital city or in the major cities where usually connectivity is not a problem. But as you get further away, it becomes a challenge, no? So I think it should definitely be a priority for our governments.

In the case of Peru, I think the Government is realizing that this is important. And I have to say, we've been really lucky, both in Peru and in Chile; we've had support from the government because they realize that they not only need to expand access to digital services, but they also need to start bringing in more people to create digital products. We have a talent gap, and if we want to evolve and have more digital services, who's going to build them? So that's been really lucky on our side.

And just one final point, I think it's crucial for entrepreneurs to work hand in hand with big companies and with government. I think that we entrepreneurs have the amazing advantage of being able to take huge, sometimes irresponsible, risks. We can just go out and try new things all the time. And this is something that, as you become larger and if you're a government, it's way harder, no?

So I think we have a role to play there, in building new things, in creating new things. And I think when it comes to scaling up those things, these partnerships are essential to enable us to take what we've built and created and tested and tried to a larger scale.

Job Training Programs/Technology Industry/Public-Private Partnerships

The President. I think that's a great point. So, for example, the kind of training you're doing, even with our entire education infrastructure here, we still have that same gap.

Ms. Costa Checa. Yes.

The President. We initiated something through our administration called TechHire, where we're going into communities and cities that—where people can't imagine that they could somehow be part of the tech industry. And what we're finding is, is that through months of training—in some cases through a

community college, in some cases companies who are joining with us—it turns out that you can train people very effectively. And as we prove concept, now we have the opportunity to scale up throughout the job training programs that already exist in the U.S. Government.

So I think you're making a terrific point, that in the same way that your individual companies are taking risks, proving concept, and then trying to scale up in the private sector, part of what governments need to be doing is when they see something that is working—a tool, an app, a mechanism that saves time, makes something more convenient, makes a product more accessible to people, then we have to be prepared to change how we do business and potentially scale up as well.

So it's—you're right that it's hard sometimes for governments to take massive risks, but what governments can do is to partner with entrepreneurs, start small, work out the kinks, and then be able to back the process of scaling up in that way. Okay?

So, Jean Bosco, any additional thoughts in terms of how not only Mark, but all these VCs out here can help you out? [*Laughter*] Make your pitch, man. Tell them how they can pull out their checkbook and——

Mr. Nzeyimana. Yes. I think Facebook is doing a great job in terms of improving connectivities. And when you look at the situation in my country, we are really trying, but we still have a lot of—a long way to go because connectivity is only available in cities. And although you can find it in the villages, but it's not really fast so that you can't use it on some activities like watching videos or sending heavy files to other people.

So we are still having a challenge in terms of connectivity and a rapid Internet. But what we're trying to do as small businesses is looking at the tools that big companies like a Facebook offers so that we can benefit from them, like using messengers to exchange messages with our potential customers. And you know, we use, like, adverts to see how we can disseminate messages.

Because in my country, a lot of people don't know this kind of waste management things that we want to bring, and you see that in many places people don't sort waste at the source, they just throw waste everywhere. But we are using this kind of technology to teach people that they have to sort waste from organic to nonorganic, because this is beneficial in this way and this is harmful in this way.

So we are trying to use these kinds of tools to disseminate such image. And the challenge that we are still facing is the fact that when you are still small, of course, you are, like, having, like, 10 years in front of you, so that you can attract attention from many people to come and join you. But depending on this kind of spotlight exposure, support that you are getting from different people, we are trying to benefit from these kinds of initiatives to disseminate the messages and bring attention of many people to what we're doing.

Internet Connectivity

The President. Good. Mai.

Ms. Medhat. Yes, I don't know where to start exactly. In Egypt, Facebook—we started a revolution out of Facebook. So—[*applause*]. Facebook was the only way we communicated during the revolution. And after that—and I believe you have the numbers, but the Facebook penetration has grown tremendously since then. And it's a basic tool now. Like, now everyone in Egypt, they have Facebook. And we were just talking about the Facebook Basics. And now it's—it was blocked in Egypt, so I think there is a lot to do.

And also back to the connectivity thing, I think—I'm praying now if—I'm not sure if my team and my family are watching this or not because they can't livestream. [*Laughter*] I hope they are not saying—seeing the——

The President. The buffering.

Ms. Medhat. ——the loading. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's so irritating. I know. [*Laughter*]

Ms Medhat. Yes, it's very basic.

The President. I hear you. If it makes you feel any better, it happens to me too. [*Laughter*] I thought I'd have the best gear, but I'm just sitting there waiting, waiting. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Medhat. Yes, it affects the business as well. Now I moved to Dubai, and I have to manage the team in Cairo. And it's very hard to communicate; it's very hard to do, like, a Skype call with the team or something like that. So we have to work around it. We have to pay a lot of money. Actually, I have been trying to get another line in the office for, like, 4 months now, and we still didn't get another line. So the network access——

The President. That's in Dubai?

Ms. Medhat. That's in Egypt, in Cairo. No, Dubai is——

The President. Is better?

Ms. Medhat. It's even—yes, it's much more better. [*Laughter*] Yes, they're doing a decent job in Dubai, yes.

Internet Connectivity/Open Government/Entrepreneurship/2008 Presidential Election

The President. I mean some of this is—you raise a couple important points. First of all, the huge opportunity here is for countries to leapfrog existing infrastructure. And we're—obviously, we see this in Africa, in India, places where mobile banking and payment systems have accelerated even more rapidly than they have here: farmers using information to access prices to markets so that they're selling their goods at a decent price.

So there is an infrastructure and connectivity function that governments can play. You're raising another question—an issue, though, which is a sensitive topic in some countries, which is openness. Okay, it is hard to foster and encourage an entrepreneurial culture if it's closed and if information flows are blocked. And what we are seeing around the world oftentimes is governments wanting the benefits of entrepreneurship and connectivity, but thinking that top-down control is also compatible with that. And it's not.

People remark on my 2008 campaign and how we were really early adapters of so much technology. It wasn't because I knew what I was doing. [*Laughter*] It's because a bunch of 20-year-olds came to me and said, hey, there's this new thing called Myspace or—[*laughter*].

Mr. Zuckerberg. Ouch. [*Laughter*]

The President. And—[*laughter*]. That was just a little dig there. [*Laughter*]

But the point is that they had all this stuff that I had never heard of. And if I had tried to maintain control and said, no, no, no, they—we're going with pamphlets—[*laughter*]—because I'm used to pamphlets, and I can control what's in the pamphlet, then I might not be sitting here.

So—well, the same is true for governments as a whole. There is a cultural shift that is sometimes difficult that says we are empowering individuals. And we are open to ideas. We are willing to admit new information that maybe contradicts our old preconceptions. We're willing to test those new ideas. And if they don't work, we're going to try something else.

I—that's the connection between connectivity and the Internet and science. I mean, part of what has created all this, part of what Stanford is all about is our capacity to say, we don't know, to say that all the received wisdom might not be right. And we're willing to test it. And that is threatening sometimes. It's threatening to governments. It's threatening to cultures. But that is the essence of discovery and innovation.

And so one of the things that we've been trying to do and just encourage through the State Department is to gently—and sometimes, bluntly—talk to governments about their need to maintain an openness and a confidence in their own people.

Now, it—what makes it harder, admittedly, is the fact that the openness and the power of connectivity also can empower some bad people. And so us wrestling with how do we counter the sort of violent extremism that can end up poisoning the mind and resulting in what we saw happening in Orlando, that's a constant balance that we're trying to weigh. But what I worry about is people using that as an excuse then to try to block things off and control the flow of information. And that's a question that I think young people are attuned to, and they're going to have to pay attention to and all of us are going to have to fight for in the years to come.

Well, this has been an extraordinary conversation. How are we doing on time? It's—we're all done? But I'm having so much fun. [*Laughter*] Give the—give our panelists a big round of applause. Congratulations for the great work you're doing.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:55 a.m. in Stanford Memorial Auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Antonio J. Gracias, founder, managing partner, and chief investment officer, Valor Equity Partners; and William H. Gates III, founder, technology adviser, and board member, Microsoft Corp., in his capacity as founder of Breakthrough Energy Coalition's Mission Innovation initiative. Ms. Medhat referred to Nihal Fares, cofounder and chief procurement officer, Eventtus. The related Executive Order 13731 was signed on June 24 and is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the United Kingdom's European Union Membership Referendum
June 24, 2016

The people of the United Kingdom have spoken, and we respect their decision. The special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom is enduring, and the United Kingdom's membership in NATO remains a vital cornerstone of U.S. foreign, security, and economic policy. So too is our relationship with the European Union, which has done so much to promote stability, stimulate economic growth, and foster the spread of democratic values and ideals across the continent and beyond. The United Kingdom and the European Union will remain indispensable partners of the United States even as they begin negotiating their ongoing relationship to ensure continued stability, security, and prosperity for Europe, Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the world.

NOTE: The statement referred to the United Kingdom's June 23 referendum vote to leave the European Union.

Statement on the First Anniversary of the Directive on United States Nationals Taken Hostage Abroad and Personnel Recovery Efforts
June 24, 2016

One year ago today, I reaffirmed the unwavering commitment of the United States to do everything in our power to bring home Americans held overseas and to help their families. Because we were determined to do better, we conducted a comprehensive review of our hostage policy with the help of courageous families and former hostages. I signed an Executive order to better organize Federal efforts around this mission and to improve how we work with and support the families of those held unjustly abroad.

Today, experts from across Government work together, side by side, at our Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell located at the FBI. They are focused on creating and implementing recovery strategies as well as providing increased support for families and loved ones. At the State Department, my Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, Jim O'Brien, works tirelessly with other nations to recover American citizens held abroad. And with guidance from my National Security Council staff, our Hostage Response Group—accountable to me—is ensuring that all the elements we put into place last year are working together as a team.

Thanks to these efforts, Americans held overseas have been brought home and reunited with their families this past year. I'm grateful to all the dedicated professionals across our Government whose relentless efforts have made these reunions possible. But I know our work will not be done until our fellow Ameri-

cans who are held against their will, and whose families mark their calendars by the days since they've held their loved ones, are reunited.

We will not stop until we can bring our fellow citizens back to their families. That includes Austin Tice, a journalist who went to Syria determined to shed light on some of the world's most vulnerable people, and Caitlan Coleman, who was abducted with her husband in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. And we are committed to determining the whereabouts of Robert Levinson, a retired FBI agent who went missing in Iran over 9 years ago.

The families of Americans missing and those being held unjustly deserve to be whole again. Across our Government, people are working every day to bring their loved ones home. We will never stop, no matter how long it takes.

NOTE: The statement referred to Joshua Boyle, husband of Caitlan Coleman, who was kidnapped shortly after arriving in Ghazni, Afghanistan, in October 2012.

Remarks at a Reception for Governor Jay R. Inslee of Washington in Seattle, Washington
June 24, 2016

The President. Hello, Seattle! It's good to be back! Thank you! Thank you. It's good to see you. Thank you so much. All right, everybody, sit down. I can—thank you. Thank you so much. Please, have a seat. Have a seat.

Audience members. We love you!

The President. I love you back. I love you back. I—thank you! All right.

Audience member. Four more years! Four more years!

The President. No, I can't. There's a Constitution. I can't do that. But more importantly, Michelle will not let me do that. [*Laughter*]

I love coming to Seattle. [*Applause*] Love Seattle. You fly in; it is gorgeous. The people are warm, even when the weather is not. [*Laughter*] And it's true, as Jay said, I do sometimes feel the spirit of my mother here, because she went to high school here. And there's a real sense of roots when I come here.

And it's wonderful to see some great friends. I want to just mention a few of them. First of all, one of my favorite people, somebody who I believe is one of the most effective public servants that we have in this country, give it up for your Senator, Patty Murray, who is in the house. [*Applause*] I love Patty Murray! Now, Patty is one of these folks who is tough and has these deep, abiding convictions about the people she's working for and the community she's trying to help, and yet as tough as she is, she can still bring both parties together when other people can't.

When Congress couldn't get a compromise on a budget, she brought Republicans and Democrats together around a way to prevent a foolish Government shutdown; worked with parents and teachers to lead bipartisan reform of No Child Left Behind; fought to open new VA clinics across this State. When Republicans were holding up the Violence Against Women Act, she didn't stop fighting until she broke through the gridlock and passed a law protecting every woman in Washington State. She is one of our best, and I'm glad you sent her to Washington.

Following in her footsteps, you've got some outstanding Members of Congress, including Suzan DelBene. Love her. Doing great work. Derek Kilmer, who wanted to be here today, but they're both working hard back in DC. And you're lucky to have them, because they're working hard on your behalf. One of the best mayors in America, your Mayor, Ed Murray, is in the house. An outstanding attorney general, Bob Ferguson, is in the house. Your County Executive, doing great work for the region, Dow Constantine, is in the house. Give him a big round of applause.

And I am here today to support a great friend of mine, one of America's outstanding Governors: your Governor, Jay Inslee. [*Applause*] Jay Inslee. Now, let me say this. When

I first got to know Jay, I could tell that he was a passionate public servant, that he cared about people. But on the basketball court—[*laughter*]—he was kind of a hack. [*Laughter*] He fouled a lot. There wasn't a lot foot speed, but the elbows kind of came flying your way. [*Laughter*] And yet I'm here anyway——

Gov. Inslee. All right!

The President. ——despite the bumps and bruises. Secret Service asked me, do you want, sir, for us to take him out of here? [*Laughter*] I said, no, no, it's okay, as I limped off the court. [*Laughter*]

But I know Jay well, and I've seen his leadership up close. I've seen it in Washington. But, I think, more powerfully, I've seen it here in Washington. Jay was mentioning when I visited Oso after the mudslide a couple years back, and I watched him console victims and bring people together and help the community rebuild. And one of the reasons that I love Jay so much is because he doesn't just have what it takes to lead Washington State on a day-to-day basis, he's willing to make the tough decisions that position this State to succeed in the long run. And that means sometimes taking decisions that aren't immediately popular. It means sometimes taking risks. But that's the kind of public servant you want. You want somebody who's got a conscience and who's not just playing to the polls all the time.

And I've worked with a lot of Governors over the past 7½ years, and I can honestly say that there are very few who love every inch of their State and every person in this State as much as Jay Inslee loves Washington State.

And without his leadership, America would not have made all the progress we've made together. And we've made progress. We've made progress because of Jay. We've made progress because of Patty. We made progress because of some of the outstanding Members of Congress that you've sent. We made progress because of you: because you worked hard and you voted and you knocked on doors; because you believed we could do better.

Together, over the past 6 years, America's businesses have created more than 14 million new jobs. That's not an accident. Over the past 4 years, nearly a quarter of a million new jobs have come to Washington State. That did not just happen on its own. It's because Jay is making the right decisions that give businesses the confidence to be right here in Washington State.

He helped pass the largest infrastructure package in Washington State's history, lining up new investments in all forms of transportation that will create jobs faster and help small businesses and ship goods faster and help, most importantly, parents get home to their kids faster from a long day's work.

Together, over the past 8 years, we've cut the oil we buy from foreign countries in half, doubled the clean energy we generate, worked to put in place new rules on the amount of carbon pollution our power plants can dump into the air that our kids breathe. And while Republicans and big polluters have teamed up to block those rules, Jay Inslee is using the authority under Washington's State's Clean Air Act to put a first-ever cap on carbon emissions. One of the strongest advocates on this issue in the country, and when you reelect him, America will continue to lead in the fight against climate change.

Together, we made sure that for the first time ever, more than 90 percent of Americans know the financial security of health insurance. That was thanks to some amazing work from your congressional delegation, but it was also thanks in part to Governor Inslee's decision to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, covering hundreds of thousands of Washington residents. And I know we've got a couple hundred nurses here in the house. I love nurses! And they know how much of a difference it's made in the lives of the people that they're helping every single day. We appreciate you.

I mean, I like doctors. But I love me some nurses. [*Laughter*] I'm just saying. I'm just speaking the truth. When Malia was born, our first child—she just graduated from high school and the—[*applause*]. I suppose that's worthy of applause. I'm still kind of—[*laughter*]—wondering how that happened so fast. [*Laughter*] But those of you who have gone

through this experience should know that you start having these flashbacks. And I remember Malia being born. And what I remember was being in the hospital, and I'd done all the breathing exercise things—[*laughter*]—and all this stuff. And I forgot all of it—[*laughter*]—because I was sort of panicked. And Michelle was just sitting there handling her business. [*Laughter*] But what I remember is, the entire time, there were nurses there. And the ob-gyn who delivered is one of our best friends, so I can say this about her. I think she came in for the last 5 minutes—[*laughter*]—and then she left to see another patient. But those nurses were with us the whole time. That's why I love nurses. Anyway, I had to go on a tangent there about nurses because I really like nurses.

Where was I? Together, we've increased early childhood education and lifted high school graduation rates to new highs and boosted graduations in fields like engineering. And we could not have done it without the record investment Jay Inslee made in early learning and all-day kindergarten and smaller class sizes and reducing the cost of college tuition for more young people and respecting teachers for being the outstanding professionals that they are. I love teachers too.

Together, we made sure our LGBT brothers and sisters have more of the rights guaranteed to them by the founding documents, including the right to marry who they love in all 50 States. And when folks tried to weaken Washington State's landmark civil rights law to discriminate against transgender members of the community, Jay Inslee stood up and said no, that's not right. That's the kind of Governor you've got.

And that's why you've got to give Jay another 4 years. Because this election matters.

[*At this point, an audience member began singing.*]

The President. This election matters. Is somebody singing back there? [*Laughter*]

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you too.

But listen, we can come together to tackle the challenges that we face, or we can—I'm sorry, what's going on there?

Audience member. Mr. President, use your authority to ban oil trains now!

The President. To ban what?

Audience members. Oil trains.

The President. Huh?

Audience members. Oil trains.

The President. Oil trains. I see, okay. All right, I've got you. I heard you.

Audience member. Yes?

The President. I said I heard you. I think now let's—I'm making a note of it. You've made your point. Can I go on now? Okay, all right. Thank you. Thank you. It's all right. No, this is what I love about the Democratic Party. [*Laughter*] It doesn't matter what I—how much I do, I've always got a bigger to-do list. [*Laughter*] Well, it's like, I'm sorry, what, you organized the world around climate change? Got a Paris agreement signed? Nope, you didn't deal with this yet. [*Laughter*] So I've still got 6 months. Give me a little time. Glory! Thank you.

Gov. Inslee. You're going to use them too.

The President. That's true.

Gov. Inslee. You're going to use them.

The President. Absolutely. All right. We're going to use those 6 months. Where was I again? [*Laughter*]

Audience member. I love you! [*Laughter*]

The President. So this election matters. We can come together to tackle in a serious way the challenges that we face. Or we can let ourselves be torn apart with divisive rhetoric and an economic agenda that is rooted in the same kinds of theories that got us into a crisis in 2008 and that we spent all these years digging ourselves out of.

And look, I've said this before. I genuinely want to see a healthy, well-functioning two-party system. I do not believe that anybody is born Democrat or Republican. I don't think any single party has a monopoly on wisdom. I come from the State of Illinois, where the first Republican President, a guy named Abraham Lincoln, did some pretty good stuff. But the Republican rhetoric and the Republican agenda

right now is not going to move this country forward.

And I know they're saying all kinds of stuff about Jay and Patty and Suzan and Derek. Lord knows, they're saying stuff about me. [*Laughter*] But I do think it is useful for us to look at what they've said before in order to determine the veracity of what they're saying now. I think it's useful to look at the evidence, to play back the tape. In sports, you've got an instant replay, and you can say, all right, here's what happened. So let's check out the Republicans' track record.

They warned that our clean energy policies would push gas prices over 6 bucks a gallon. That's—no, run back the tape. That's what they said. Right now they're about $2.70 here in Seattle. They warned that our policies would make our deficits skyrocket. We've cut our deficits by almost three-quarters.

Just in 2012, they said, elect us, get rid of Obama, we'll get the unemployment rate to 6 percent by the end of 2016. It's at 4.7 percent right now. Run back the tape! Run back the tape! Sometimes, I think, do you remember what you said? [*Laughter*]

They warned, Obamacare would kill jobs. Well, I mean, they warned apocalypse, including killing jobs. [*Laughter*] And toads were going to rain down from the sky, and the Earth would crack open. [*Laughter*] And it would kill jobs. We ended up covering another 20 million Americans, helped keep health care inflation to a 50-year low, protected folks who have insurance from always being able to get it even if you've got a preexisting condition, covered millions of young people all across the country—could stay on their parent's plan. And since I signed the Affordable Care Act into law, our businesses have created jobs every single month for 75 straight months, an alltime record streak of private sector job growth in America. Look at the tape! Look at the record!

Them's the facts. [*Laughter*] It's the facts. I know that sometimes they don't traffic in facts. [*Laughter*] That's not, sort of, something they put a premium on. But facts are important. [*Laughter*] They really are, even in politics. [*Laughter*]

And the reason it's important for us to look at what was said before and what has actually happened is because we're not finished. We've still got more work to do to help folks get ahead in today's economy. And we've got to have smart and forward-thinking leadership like Jay's to help us do it.

But folks have reason to feel anxious about some of the longer term trends in the economy that are making working families feel less secure. These are trends that predated me coming into office, or Jay coming into office. And they're not—they haven't all gone away. We've made enormous progress recovering from crisis, but despite the drop in unemployment, wages are still growing too slowly, which is making it harder for families to pay for college or save for retirement. Global competition and the race of technology has left too many workers feeling like they can't catch up, that they're being left behind. It's causing greater inequality, and we're seeing folks at the very top—and this is true not just here, but all around the world—amassing more and more extraordinary wealth and influence while a lot of people feel as if they're just treading water.

These are real challenges. The anxieties they cause are real. And unfortunately, when people are anxious and scared, there are going to be politicians out there who try to prey on that frustration to get themselves headlines and to get themselves votes. And that's what the Republicans have been doing for a while now. That's the story they've been telling. Not just their guy at the top of the ticket, but up and down the ticket and in States like Washington.

Their story is that working folks have been victimized by freeloaders and minorities and unions and the "47 percent." And immigrants and foreigners are stealing whatever jobs Obamacare hasn't already killed. [*Laughter*] They don't tell you what they're for. They define their economic agenda by what they're against or, more often, who they're against.

And all too often, it divides Americans, who are—actually have common economic interests and who should be working together for a better deal from the people who are supposed to be serving them. And when things don't

change it makes folks cynical about our government, and it keeps us from pushing our political system in a steady, thoughtful, creative way to solve our actual economic challenges.

The fact is, working families of all races, of all backgrounds deserve higher wages. Families of all ethnicities and all religious faiths deserve quality health care and decent retirement savings. Every child in this country deserves an education that lets them dream bigger than their immediate circumstances. And if we're going to transform our politics to make them responsive to working families, we've got to reject a politics that pits working Americans against one another. We are stronger together, and we've got to fight together to give everybody a fair shot at opportunity and security. That's what we believe. That's what we stand for.

And the good news is, we can do it. There—you know, there's some stuff that's really complicated, but then there's some things that actually we know work. We've seen them work. We can get wages rising faster. They're up about 3 percent so far this year, but we could do even more by raising the minimum wage high enough to keep working families from living in poverty. Jay tried to do that here. Republicans blocked it. We've got to keep on pushing to make it happen.

We've got to make sure every worker can get paid sick leave. Jay tried to do that here. Republicans blocked it. We've got to keep on pushing. We've got to make sure women get equal pay for equal work. What do you think Republicans want to do?

So if you care about making sure working families get bigger paychecks, there's a clear choice in this election.

Together, we've got to better prepare our children and our workers for the high-tech, high-wage jobs of tomorrow. We know that early childhood education works. And when childcare costs take a huge share of the family's budget, we should be investing in smart ways to do it across the country. We know how to make college more affordable. Democratic Governors like Jay Inslee are doing good work on these issues right now. But he's got to have 4 more years to get the job done. That's the choice in this election.

There are things we know work. We should be investing in our youngest children, putting people back to work building highways, researching new discoveries and innovations, making college more affordable, promoting clean energy of the future. That's what Jay Inslee is trying to do. And every time, Republicans try to block these investments for no other reason than this cult that they're praying to of small government. [*Laughter*] And it just hurts all of us. We've got to make smart investments that help all of us succeed. That's the choice in this election.

Think about what just happened in Orlando a few days ago. We can protect more of our kids, our people from the horrors of gun violence. Just a couple of weeks after the worst mass shooting in modern history, Republicans in the U.S. Senate blocked any new gun safety reforms. Republicans in the House wouldn't even allow a vote on them. If you think we can take smart steps to protect our rights and our young people when they go to movies or to worship or to a nightclub or to school, then you've got to vote in this election.

We can reform our immigration system in a way that boosts our economy and lives up to our tradition as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. We've got a Congress that refuses to fix a broken immigration system. Just yesterday the Supreme Court couldn't reach a decision on a critical immigration initiative because most Republicans have failed to do their job and even meet with my nominee for the Supreme Court, who everybody, including Republicans, say is eminently qualified for the job.

So now it's up to you, the voters. This November, you get to decide whether or not this country gets an immigration policy that is as good and as decent and as sensible as the American people are. It's going to be up to you. You've got to vote!

Together, we can make sure the economy works for everybody by strengthening, and not weakening, the rules that keep Wall Street in check; that make sure that folks can't avoid

paying their fair share of taxes. Big banks and Republicans have teamed up to try to roll back these rules. Have they really forgotten what happened just 8 years ago? They've opposed our efforts to make sure that financial advisers put your best interests ahead of corporate interests. Why? Wall Street doesn't need more of your retirement savings. You worked for that money.

They've even opposed our efforts to close loopholes that let corporations shift their address abroad just to avoid paying their fair share of taxes here in America. You don't get to avoid paying your taxes. Why should they? We should not stack the decks for Wall Street or folks at the very top. We should have closed those loopholes a long time ago and used some of the savings for tax breaks that help working families pay for childcare or send their kids to college or save for retirement or give a break to some young person who is willing to go into teaching or into nursing or some helping profession. That's what we should be doing.

So look, on issue after issue, you've got a choice to make this November.

Audience member. Democrat!

The President. We've got to—that's a good choice. [*Laughter*]

You can roll back the progress that we've made on climate, or you can come together to protect our planet. You can roll back our fundamental right to vote, or you can protect it for everybody. You can roll back women's rights to protect every woman's right to earn fair pay and make her own health care choices about her own body. You can choose more or less inequality. You can choose to stack the decks for banks and big polluters and insurance lobbies and the gun lobby, or you can make sure that in America, everybody has got a chance to succeed.

That's the choice you face this November: between dividing ourselves up, looking for scapegoats, ignoring the evidence, or realizing that we are all stronger together.

If we turn against each other, whether it's divisions of race or religion, we're not going to build on the progress we've started. If we get cynical and just vote our fears, or we don't vote at all, we won't build on the progress we've started.

America has been a story of progress, but has not gone in a straight line. There have been times where we've gone forward; there have been times where we've gone backwards. And what's made the difference each and every time is citizens voting and caring and committing to our better selves. Coming together around our common values and our faith in hard work and our faith in each other and the belief in opportunity for everybody and assuming the best in each other and not the worst.

Because whatever our differences, we all love this country, and we all care fiercely about our children's futures. And we don't have time for charlatans. And we don't have time for hatred. And we don't have time for bigotry. And we don't have time for flimflam. And we don't have the luxury of just popping off and saying whatever comes to the top of our heads. [*Laughter*] Don't have time for that.

There may be setbacks along the way, and our progress will always be unfinished, and every one of you will always have another list of things for me to do. [*Laughter*] But what I know is that with steady, persistent, collective effort, things get better. With steady, persistent, collective effort and thought and cooperation, we ultimately deliver brighter days for our children and our children's children.

That's what I believe. That's what Jay Inslee believes. That's what Patty Murray believes and Suzan DelBene and Derek Kilmer and Ed Murray. That's what we believe. That's why we went into this work. And that's why we need you. That's why you've got to stay involved in this election. It is too important for any of us to stay home. We cannot let anybody else decide our future for us. It's going to be built by us, together, as one Nation, as one people.

That's what you're going to do. Because I believe in you. And I've never been more optimistic about the future of the country that we love. I'm going to be right there with you every step of the way. Washington State, let's go get the job done! Let's finish what we started!

God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:08 p.m. in Ballroom 4E at the Washington State Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to County Executive Dow Constantine of King County, WA; Anita K. Blanchard, professor of obstetrics and gynecology, University of Chicago Medicine; Donald J. Trump, chairman and president, Trump Organization, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate; and Supreme Court Associate Justice–designate Merrick B. Garland.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Medina, Washington

June 24, 2016

The President. Let me begin my thanking Steve and Heather for their extraordinary hospitality and opening up their home. And I'm told that people will put everything back to where it was. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. That's what I've been told.

The President. That's what you've been told. And I've been told the same. So if it doesn't happen and you need me to come over to help move the chairs around, I'll be happy to help. [*Laughter*] But thank you to you and your family. We so appreciate your hospitality. That's right, give a big round of applause.

A couple of people I want to acknowledge. First of all, the reason we do this is because we have some outstanding public servants who are fighting every day the good fight on behalf of a whole bunch of issues. Washington State is lucky to have one of the outstanding delegations of just about any State, and so I just wanted to make sure that everybody has a chance to give him a big round of applause. First of all, Representative Denny Heck. Representative Derek Kilmer. And your neighbor, who I know worked tirelessly to make sure that this was a successful event and is also working tirelessly in Washington and just doing a great job, Suzan DelBene.

We also have former Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke. I guess he was also a Governor. [*Laughter*] And the chair of the DCCC, Ben Ray Luján is here. And finally, somebody who has been my ally, friend, confidante, occasionally has whipped me into shape—I think I've gotten to know a lot of people in politics, and I don't know a lot of people who combine smarts, toughness, passion, savvy, and a big heart more than Nancy Pelosi.

So my tradition in relatively intimate settings like this is not to give a long speech. I just spoke to 3,000 folks. I'm sure it's on YouTube. You can take a look at it. [*Laughter*] I just want to make a couple of brief remarks to set the stage, and then this is really a conversation.

We are going through extraordinary times. The speed of transformation that the world is going through is probably unmatched than any time in history. I just came from San Francisco, where we had the seventh of our Global Entrepreneurship Summits. And it is as inspiring an event as we do. We've done them in various parts of the world. And we bring together extraordinary, young, talented entrepreneurs from, in this case, 170 countries.

I did a panel with Mark Zuckerberg and three of them. One was a woman from Egypt that had started a platform for event organizing in Egypt and now has opened an office in Dubai. Another was a young man from Rwanda who had developed a technology to take refuse and use it as biofuels so you wouldn't see as much chopping down of trees, and would be more environmentally sound. The third was this extraordinary young woman from Peru who was training young women, working class women, into digital skills. And they were now getting jobs in a burgeoning digital economy, not just in Peru, but now in other parts of Latin America.

And you listened to them, and it made you so optimistic about the prospects of the world. And it represented all the promise and excitement and opportunity presented by the fact that the world is shrinking and becoming more connected.

Now, this of course was against the backdrop of Brexit and the nominee of the Presidency for the other party at a golf course—[*laughter*]—and a reaction to the world shrinking and interconnectedness. And it speaks to how we are at this moment in time in which the opportunities have never been greater, where young people are more educated and more sophisticated and more engaged and more involved than ever before; where by almost every measure, the world is actually healthier, wealthier, less violent, more tolerant than it's ever been before, but where there are also communities that are being left behind, people who feel that their lives have been disrupted by this great change, trend lines that show growing inequality, even after we've recovered from a crisis. And the choices we make now really matter. They really count.

And I would like to say that what we've had over the last 8 years and what we're having now is a serious conversation between two parties, where we've agreed on the facts that there is climate change or that there are problems with inequality or that we have to take seriously the importance of reaching out to young, disaffected people and giving them a chance and investing in education. I'd like to think that we were having a serious conversation of that sort.

But that's not what's happened. Because we have a party right on the other side that ignores the science and facts of climate change, that presents budgets whose numbers don't even come close to adding up, that are promoting ideas of cutting taxes for those of us who don't need tax cuts and cutting vital services to the most vulnerable of our populations and threatening to run up deficits. A party that increasingly relies on rhetoric that divides the country as opposed to brings it together. That refuses to even hold a hearing on a Supreme Court nominee that everybody, including Republican themselves have said may be one of the most qualified people ever to be nominated to the bench. The list goes on.

And it's interesting, at the end of my Presidency, I reflect back, and I am not somebody who believes that inherently one party has a monopoly on wisdom. I come from the State of Illinois where the first Republican President was a guy named Abraham Lincoln, and where I believe that our democracy works best when we have a vigorous, serious debate between parties that are trying to genuinely solve the big problems that our country and the world confront.

But I cannot say in good conscience that that's what's happening on the other side. And if you didn't think the stakes were high before, you should think the stakes are pretty high right now. And the good news is that, on issue after issue, whether it's commonsense gun laws that might not prevent every death in an Orlando nightclub, but might prevent 100 people being shot and half of those folks being killed in the span of minutes; if you're concerned about making sure that we continue to make progress on climate change—on all these issues, the majority agrees with us. But that has to translate into votes, and that has to translate into seats in Congress, and that has to translate into legislation, and it has to translate into actual policies that impact people's lives.

A lot of times, we make politics more complicated than it is. If you've got the votes, you get stuff done. And if you don't, the place doesn't work. When Nancy Pelosi was the Speaker of the House, we had a 2-year run that was probably more productive legislatively than any time since the 1960s. When Nancy Pelosi was no longer Speaker, we've got Government shutdowns and dysfunction. And unfortunately, sometimes, this gets reported as Washington not working. No, it's not Washington not working. It is a party that has decided that their approach to maintaining power is to make sure that Washington does not work and to breed to cynicism and to discourage voting in pursuit of either protecting the status quo and the special interests that they represent or in pursuit of an ideological fixation on small government for the sake of small government.

And if we don't do the work that we have to do in order to change that, shame on us. I've got a daughter that just graduated from high school. I just had a chance to meet—Steven had his kid who seemed extraordinary and doing great work. I've had a chance to meet some

of your kids in the past, who, some of you brought them here today. If you talk to them, you meet them, you can't help but think our best days are ahead of us. But we've got to do our jobs so that they can actually realize that extraordinary potential. We can't screw up so bad that they can't fix it. And that requires us to have a level of commitment and devotion right now that meets the moment. Your presence here today is a good start, but it's not the end of it. We've got more work to do.

Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:32 p.m. at the residence of Sudhir Steven Singh and Heather Singh. In his remarks, he referred to Mark E. Zuckerberg, founder and chief executive officer, Facebook, Inc.; Mai Medhat, cofounder and chief executive officer, Eventtus; Jean Bosco Nzeyimana, founder and chief executive officer, HABONA Ltd.; Mariana Costa Checa, cofounder and executive director, Laboratoria; Donald J. Trump, chairman and president, Trump Organization, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate; and Supreme Court Associate Justice–designate Merrick B. Garland. He also referred to the United Kingdom's June 23 referendum vote to leave the European Union. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
June 25, 2016

Hi, everybody. The story of America is a story of progress. It's written by ordinary people who put their shoulders to the wheel of history to make sure that the promise of our founding applies not just to some of us, but to all of us: farmers and blacksmiths who chose revolution over tyranny; immigrants who crossed oceans and the Rio Grande; women who reached for the ballot and scientists who shot for the Moon; the preachers and porters and seamstresses who guided us towards the mountaintop of freedom.

Sometimes, we can mark that progress in special places, hallowed ground where our history was written, places like Independence Hall, Gettysburg, Seneca Falls, Kitty Hawk, and Cape Canaveral. Well, one of these special places is the Stonewall Inn. Back in 1969, as a turbulent decade was winding down, the Stonewall Inn was a popular gathering place for New York City's LGBT community. At the time, being gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender was considered obscene, illegal, even a mental illness.

One night, police raided the bar and started arresting folks. Raids like these were nothing new, but this time, the patrons had had enough. So they stood up and spoke out. The riots became protests; the protests became a movement; the movement ultimately became an integral part of America.

Over the past 7 years, we've seen achievements that would have been unimaginable to the folks who, knowingly or not, started the modern LGBT movement at Stonewall. Today, all Americans are protected by a hate crimes law that includes sexual orientation and gender identity. "Don't ask, don't tell" is history. Insurance companies can no longer turn you away because of who you are. Transgender Americans are more visible than ever, helping to make our Nation more inclusive and welcoming for all. And 1 year ago this weekend, we lit the White House in every color, because in every State in America, you're now free to marry the person you love.

There's still work to do. As we saw 2 weeks ago in Orlando, the LGBT community still faces real discrimination, real violence, real hate. So we can't rest. We've got to keep pushing for equality and acceptance and tolerance.

But the arc of our history is clear: It's an arc of progress. And a lot of that progress can be traced back to Stonewall. So this week, I'm designating the Stonewall National Monument as the newest addition to America's national parks system. Stonewall will be our first national monument to tell the story of the struggle for LGBT rights. I believe our national parks

should reflect the full story of our country, the richness and diversity and uniquely American spirit that has always defined us: that we are stronger together; that out of many, we are one. That's what makes us the greatest nation on Earth. And it's what we celebrate at Stonewall, for our generation and for all those who come after us.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:40 p.m. on June 15 in the State Dining Room at the White House for broadcast on June 25. Proclamation 9465, which established the Stonewall National Monument, was signed on June 24 and is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 24, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 25. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture
June 26, 2016

Today marks the 29th anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Convention Against Torture. This is a day to affirm the United States abiding commitment to achieve a world without torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

On my second day in office I issued an Executive order reaffirming the United States commitment to the universal ban on torture, and we have worked hard every day to match our words with actions. We have owned up to past mistakes and helped advance humane treatment safeguards through the clarification and codification of our obligations. My experience as Commander in Chief has only reinforced my conviction that, the United States must never resort to torture. In addition to betraying our values and obligations, it would embolden repressive regimes, serve as a pretext for terrorist recruitment and violent extremism, and damage the United States reputation as a force for good in the world.

Today we stand in solidarity with victims of torture around the world and thank the many Americans who work tirelessly to achieve the goals inscribed in the Convention Against Torture. Their work embodies the best of who we are as a nation at the same time as it makes us stronger and more secure.

Remarks Honoring the 2015 Women's National Basketball Association Champion Minnesota Lynx
June 27, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody, hello! Hello! Everybody—everybody, have a seat. Everybody, have a seat. Oliver is upset—[*laughter*]—that Mom is up here and he's not. Now, if you want to bring Oliver up here, you—that's fine. Coach, what do you think? Come on.

Audience members. Aww!

The President. Yes, come on. There you go. Look, he's got his little suit on and everything. [*Laughter*] Look at him—got the bow tie.

Head Coach Cheryl Reeve. Can you say say hi to Mr. President?

The President. Hey, man. High five?

Coach Reeve. Say high hive. High five?

The President. There you go. All right, now that we've got that settled. [*Laughter*]

Good afternoon, everybody. Give it up for the 2015 WNBA champion the Minnesota Lynx! Yes. So this is this team's third visit to the White House in the past 5 years. So I guess I should ask: "Whose house?" [*Laughter*]

Player. Our house!

Coach Reeve. Our house!

The President. Our house!

We have some Lynx fans in the house, including your outstanding Senator, Amy Klobu-

char. WNBA President Lisa Borders is here. Welcome back to Coach Cheryl Reeve—third title with the Lynx. You get a sense she's feeling greedy though. [*Laughter*] She wants more. [*Laughter*] When the Lynx won it all, with champion—you know, banners going up, champagne popping, she looked around and said, "This never gets old." [*Laughter*] This never gets old. And you can see how the way—by the way they're playing this year that it has not gotten old for any of the players either.

Now, I want to take a moment to recognize somebody who I know would have loved to have been in this moment: Flip Saunders, who was a huge part of Minnesota basketball at all levels and a supporter of this team. Obviously, he experienced a tragic illness. And so on behalf of all basketball fans, this day, too, is "For Flip." And we want to give him a big round of applause.

So I think it's fair to say this team is a powerhouse. [*Laughter*] You've got Maya Moore, Lindsay Whalen, Seimone Augustus, recently named among the top 20 players in WNBA history. So you've got—seems like you all should have more than three—[*laughter*]—when you've got that much talent. Uh-oh, I've got you. [*Laughter*] All right, well, you just wanted this moment in the sun. [*Laughter*]

Now, this isn't to say it's always easy. Last year, these women faced down midseason roster shakeups and multiple injuries——

[*At this point, a baby cried.*]

The President. I know, it was frustrating—[*laughter*]—and a championship game that started a little bleak. Lindsay sprained her ankle. Maya was trying to find her rhythm. But in the second half, the Lynx started to gain some steam. Seimone finished with 16 points. Sylvia Fowles had 20. They pulled away and won the championship by 17 points. It was their first championship at home, in front of their loyal Minnesota fans. And as Maya put it, "It wasn't a perfect year, a perfect series, or a perfect game . . . but we are the champions." And that's what matters.

They did manage to have a pretty-close-to-perfect victory party though. After the game, the Lynx drove out to Paisley Park for a private concert by one of their biggest fans, Prince, which was pretty cool and reminds us of how much we miss him. In fact, the last time I saw him, he was on this stage at a really good party. [*Laughter*]

Now, these women are not just all-star basketball players, they're also leaders in the Minnesota community. They host an annual Breast Health Awareness game in partnership with the Mayo Clinic. They made holiday cards for children of military members, teamed up with the Twin Cities Boys and Girls Club to help prepare meals for kids who would otherwise go hungry. And the team signed honorary contracts with young boys and girls who are facing big challenges, but dream of playing basketball. For a day, those young people were Lynx teammates, and that, as much as any trophy, is what makes these women champions.

So on the 20th anniversary of the WNBA, this is a good moment to celebrate all that these players and the many others who came before have accomplished. Twenty years ago, Maya, Seimone, and Lindsay were playing H–O–R–S–E in their driveway. And suddenly, they saw players like Lisa Leslie and Sheryl Swoopes and Sue Bird to look up to as role models. And there's no discounting how important that is. Today, these women—and women across the WNBA—are setting their own outstanding example for girls who are growing up today.

And they're aware of the responsibilities that come with that. As Maya says, "We're not super rich like the guys . . . but money's not everything when you're talking about dynasties and legacies and inspiring young women and men and opening people's minds." Although, money is useful too. [*Laughter*] And I am for equal pay for equal work.

But, with that, I know Lindsay would like to say a few more words. Let's give a big White House congratulations once again to the Minnesota Lynx, 2015 WNBA Champions.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:42 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Maya Moore, forward, Lindsay Whalen and Seimone Augustus, guards, and Sylvia Fowles, center, Minnesota Lynx; Lisa

Leslie, former center, WNBA's Los Angeles Sparks; Sheryl Swoopes, former head coach, Loyola University women's basketball team; and Sue Bird, guard, WNBA's Seattle Storm.

Statement on the Supreme Court's Decision in *Whole Woman's Health* v. *Hellerstedt*
June 27, 2016

I am pleased to see the Supreme Court protect women's rights and health today. As the brief filed by the Solicitor General makes clear and as the Court affirmed today, these restrictions harm women's health and place an unconstitutional obstacle in the path of a woman's reproductive freedom. We remain strongly committed to the protection of women's health, including protecting a woman's access to safe, affordable health care and her right to determine her own future. Women's opportunities are expanded and our Nation is stronger when all of our citizens have accessible, affordable health care.

Statement on the Council of the District of Columbia's Passage of Legislation To Raise the Minimum Wage
June 27, 2016

I commend the District of Columbia, Mayor Muriel Bowser, and the Council of the District of Columbia for raising the District's minimum wage. Since my first call to raise the wage in 2013, 18 States and DC have taken action, action that will help over 7 million American workers. In addition, nearly 50 cities and counties, as well as many of our leading businesses, have acted on their own to boost wages for thousands more workers. That's progress. But we must continue to build on that progress, because no American working full time in this country should struggle to make ends meet. That's why as long as I hold this office, I will continue to fight for hard-working Americans. And I will keep urging Congress to raise the Federal minimum wage so that all Americans have a fair shot to get ahead. America deserves a raise.

Statement on the Death of Patricia S. Head Summitt
June 28, 2016

Nobody walked off a college basketball court victorious more times than Tennessee's Pat Summitt. For four decades, she outworked her rivals, made winning an attitude, loved her players like family, and became a role model to millions of Americans, including our two daughters. Her unparalleled success includes never recording a losing season in 38 years of coaching, but also, and more importantly, a 100-percent graduation rate among her players who completed their athletic eligibility. Her legacy, however, is measured much more by the generations of young women and men who admired Pat's intense competitiveness and character and, as a result, found in themselves the confidence to practice hard, play harder, and live with courage on and off the court. As Pat once said in recalling her achievements: "What I see are not the numbers. I see their faces."

Pat learned early on that everyone should be treated the same. When she would play basketball against her older brothers in the family barn, they didn't treat her any differently and certainly didn't go easy on her. Later, her Hall of Fame career would tell the story of the historic progress toward equality in American athletics that she helped advance. Pat started playing college hoops before title IX and started coaching before the NCAA recognized

women's basketball as a sport. When she took the helm at Tennessee as a 22-year-old, she had to wash her players' uniforms; by the time Pat stepped down as the Lady Vols' head coach, her teams wore eight championship rings and had cut down nets in sold-out stadiums.

Pat was a patriot who earned Olympic medals for America as a player and a coach, and I was honored to award her the Presidential Medal of Freedom. She was a proud Tennessean who, when she went into labor while on a recruiting visit, demanded the pilot return to Knoxville so her son could be born in her home State. And she was an inspiring fighter. Even after Alzheimer's started to soften her memory, and she began a public and brave fight against that terrible disease, Pat had the grace and perspective to remind us that "God doesn't take things away to be cruel. . . . He takes things away to lighten us. He takes things away so we can fly."

Michelle and I send our condolences to Pat Summitt's family, which includes her former players and fans on Rocky Top and across America.

NOTE: The statement referred to Ross "Tyler" Summitt, son of Ms. Summitt.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Montenegro
June 28, 2016

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith, for Senate advice and consent to ratification, the Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Montenegro. This Protocol was signed in Brussels on May 19, 2016, on behalf of the United States and the other Parties to the North Atlantic Treaty. Also transmitted for the information of the Senate is an overview of the Protocol by the Department of State. Full ratification of the Protocol by the United States and our allies will allow Montenegro to become a Party to the North Atlantic Treaty and a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which outlines NATO's Open Door policy, is part of the doctrinal foundation of the Alliance. Montenegro's accession to NATO will demonstrate to other countries in the Balkans and beyond that NATO's door remains open to nations that undertake the reforms necessary to meet NATO's requirements and contribute to the security of the Alliance, and is yet another milestone in advancing the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Balkans. I am pleased that, with the advice and consent of the Senate, and the ratifications of this Protocol by our NATO allies, Montenegro can soon join us as a member of this great Alliance.

I ask the Senate to continue working with me in advancing a Europe whole, free, and at peace by providing its prompt advice and consent to ratification for this Protocol of Accession. My Administration stands ready to brief and assist you in your deliberations.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 28, 2016.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico in Ottawa, Canada
June 29, 2016

President Obama. Well, I just want to thank President Peña Nieto and the members of his delegation for an excellent discussion preceding our trilateral meeting.

Terrorist Attack in Istanbul, Turkey

Before I discuss the importance of the U.S.-Mexican relationship, let me just publicly extend my deepest condolences to the people of Turkey for the terrible attack that took place in Istanbul. I had a chance to speak to President Erdogan earlier today to discuss with him not only how heartbroken we have been by the images of the injured and those killed, but also to reaffirm our strong commitment to partner with Turkey, with NATO, with the broad-based alliance that we have structured around the world to fight ISIL.

It's an indication of how little these vicious organizations have to offer; that beyond killing innocents, they are continually losing ground, unable to govern those areas that they have taken over; that they're going to be defeated in Syria, they're going to be defeated in Iraq, they are going to be on the run wherever they hide. And we will not rest until we have dismantled these networks of hate that have an impact on the entire civilized world.

And I know that that view is shared by Mexico. It's shared by Canada. It's shared by all the people of this hemisphere. And it's shared in every region of the world. So we stand with the people of Turkey, and we intend to do what's necessary to make sure that these kinds of terrible events are not happening.

Mexico-U.S. Relations

Now, on a happier note, the cooperation that's been taking place between the United States and Mexico across a whole range of issues has been outstanding. We had the opportunity to discuss the continuing strength of our business, commercial, trade, and people-to-people ties.

The United States is not just a friend and neighbor of Mexico's, but the very character of the United States is shaped by Mexican Americans who have shaped our culture, our politics, our business. And at a time in which we all too often are hearing rhetoric that ignores the enormous contributions that have been made by Mexican Americans and the enormous strengths that we draw from the relationship with our good neighbor to the south, it was—it's been useful for us to reaffirm all the different issues that we've been working on together.

We are strongly committed to making sure that we have high labor and environmental standards embedded in our trade between our two countries. And that's reflected in our commitment to the Trans-Pacific Partnership. We discussed the excellent cooperation that we've received from the Mexican Government on border issues that can facilitate the kinds of trade and commerce and tourism and travel that takes place between our two countries, but also ensures that we're able to enforce our immigration laws in a way that is orderly and sound.

We talked about the joint work that we're doing together around energy and the remarkable leadership that Mexico has shown with respect to climate change. And not only has Mexico been a leader in helping to shape the Paris Agreement that was forged last year, but they are now also a leader in helping to make sure that it is implemented.

And I also want to thank Mexico for their leadership when it comes to refugee issues. And they will be one of the cohosts of a refugee summit that we are planning for September on the margins of the U.N. General Assembly.

We also discussed our joint cooperation when it comes to battling drug trafficking. And although this is something that both our governments have been fighting for a long time, there's even greater urgency in light of the increase in heroin trade. That is something that we're addressing in the United States, in the comprehensive program to combat opioids and heroin that I announced and the $1 billion that we are slating to improve treatment and prevention, as well as law enforcement and interdiction. And we are appreciative that Mexico is taking this issue seriously and going to be working alongside us developing their own strategy, but also one that is in coordination with ours.

And in the meantime, we are developing a whole host of other measures that focus on the

positive elements of the relationship between our peoples, whether it's educational, scientific, cultural.

So, as always, President Peña Nieto has been an outstanding partner. I've invited him to visit Washington one last time before I leave office. He's accepted. And so we look forward to seeing him and his delegation there. And I want to once again thank them for not only being good neighbors, but also being good friends.

Thank you so much.

President Peña Nieto. First and foremost, I would like to say that Mexico stands in solidarity with Turkey and regrets the events that took place in Turkey, events that took the lives of dozens of people. And we would like to express our solidarity with the families. We would like to condemn violence. There is no cause—there is no fight—that could call itself valid if it uses violence as a means. We condemn this terror attacks that took place in Turkey.

In terms of the bilateral meeting that we just had, first and foremost, I expressed to President Obama how grateful we are, and we want to acknowledge the political will shown by his administration to work jointly with the Government of Mexico to address topics that are common to our countries, not only in the commercial and trade arena, but also in the area of security, in the area of cooperation. And I want to underscore the importance of regional integration.

We must acknowledge that isolationism cannot bring prosperity to a society. It is from a collective effort between the countries that are located in one same region. The relationship between the United States and Mexico is historic due to our geographical vicinity. Without a doubt, the Government of President Obama and the Government of Mexico, we have stressed and emphasized the importance and relevance that working as a team has and to stand together vis-à-vis different areas that could provide a solution on the issues that we face in the region.

I expressed my recognition that we do not only have diplomatic exchanges—that is, not—we do not only have high-level agreements, we have here different officials and their counterparts from both of our countries, from the U.S. and Mexico. We have agreed to go through security cooperation issues. The security of both of our nations needs to be based on cooperation activities between the two governments by sharing information, by having day-to-day exchanges to ensure security on the U.S. side and the Mexican side.

Therefore, we have made a commitment to keep on working on the basis of dialogue. President Obama has said it already: We have to work together, and we have to reinforce the efforts done so far to fight organized crime and specifically drug trafficking: specifically, those who produce and traffic heroin. We have identified that production is on the rise, and this narcotic is taken to the United States in great numbers. We have decided to work on this issue.

We have decided to support each other in order to, in the case of Mexico, have the approval at Congress of the TPP agreements. The world is teaching us lessons. Being a strategic partners as countries strengthens development for our nations. And one of the biggest challenges that we're facing—and of course, it was part of our conversation—is that we need to be very clear in terms of describing the benefits of being an integrated region. Jobs are created. Companies are incorporated. Trade is free. And more development can reach people due to regional integration.

Isolationism is not a route towards progress. Integration is. The world is teaching us different lessons when you decide for being in isolation and what happens to those countries that decide not to be in an integrated region.

We have decided to work on the development of clean energies. Both of our countries are committed to work towards the advancement of the environment; to bolster the legal framework, in the case of Mexico, that we have managed to enact to reduce greenhouse effect gases and make—expedite progress in the generation of clean energy.

Without a doubt, the agenda between our countries is extensive. I would like to thank

President Obama for his invitation to visit very soon the United States. And we are going to keep on working on specific areas of our relationship. And this is going to reaffirm that we are neighbors, we are friends. But this friendship is based on strong cooperation and teamwork for the benefit of development and security of our nations. This is what we have discussed. These are the commitments that we have made. And we are determined to keep on working on this pathway.

Thank you very much, President Obama, for your friendship and for working as a team.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:44 a.m. in Room 104 of the Canadian Galleries at the National Gallery of Canada. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. President Peña Nieto spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada and President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico in Ottawa
June 29, 2016

Prime Minister Trudeau. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us today. President Obama, President Peña Nieto and I have just wrapped up a very productive meeting. The tone of the meeting was friendly, as you might expect among friends, but also a little poignant. We're obviously thrilled to have President Peña Nieto here for his first visit to Canada as President of Mexico. Yet, at the same time, it's a little sad that this will be the last chance for all three of us to get together in this capacity, given President Obama's impending retirement—[*laughter*]—something he pointed out to us more than once, I should add, usually with a little smile.

But I do want to once again thank both leaders and their delegations for coming to Ottawa and for being truly open to the discussions that took place today. One of the first items we discussed was our common respect for diversity and our firm support for LGBTQ2 rights, especially in the wake of the shootings earlier this month in Orlando.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

The United States and Mexico both lost citizens in Orlando. That tragedy has strengthened our determination to protect the rights of LGBTQ2 people, and on behalf of—and we urge all leaders throughout the world to do the same.

We also talked about the need to ensure a clean and prosperous future for all of our people and for all of people in the world.

[*Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in English as follows.*]

President Peña Nieto, President Obama, and I are unanimous in our belief that on this issue, North America can—and indeed must—lead the way.

Today we resolved—we turned that resolve into action with a negotiation of an ambitious and enduring North American Climate, Clean Energy, and Environment Partnership. This partnership will see our countries stand side by side as we work toward the common goal of a North America that is competitive, that encourages clean growth, and that protects our shared environment now and for generations to come. It's a partnership that lays out some very clear deliverables and that identifies realistic paths to achieving them.

Together, we will advance clean and secure energy with the goal of 50-percent clean power generation across the continent by 2025. We will drive down short-lived climate pollutants, things like methane, black carbon, and hydrofluorocarbons. We will promote clean and efficient transportation, creating clean jobs as we reduce energy consumption, air pollution, and

greenhouse gases. We will work together to protect nature and to advance our scientific understanding of the environmental challenges we share. And finally, we will respond directly and decisively to the challenge of climate change, working to make our own countries more resilient as we encourage others to do the same.

This is what can happen when countries come together in pursuit of a common goal, when we have a big idea and the political will to make it happen. Today's climate agreement stands as proof that cooperation pays off and that working together always beats going it alone.

There were, of course, other issues on the agenda as well.

[*Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

We also had the opportunity to talk about ways of advancing trade and competitiveness in North America. It's essential to each of our economies, and it is vital for the creation of good jobs for the middle class. Furthermore, we reasserted our common commitment to human rights, and we discussed the aspects on which we could be better partners to ensure the protection and defense of fundamental rights. We also discussed regional and worldwide issues that are urgent, and we talked about the way we will work together to meet these common challenges.

[*Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in English as follows.*]

We talked about how to better cooperate on defense, but it also meant forging a closer working relationship when it comes to providing development and humanitarian assistance, as well as finding ways to more effectively combat public health challenges, the illicit flow of funds and drugs, and human trafficking.

As I said, the conversations were friendly, but also frank. And I'm reassured and encouraged by the progress we were able to make today.

Relationships between the citizens of our three nations have always been strong, even in the past when our governments haven't always seen eye to eye. It's gratifying that once again we are able to come together as leaders of three truly great nations to honor that enduring friendship and to once again deliver real results for the people of Canada, Mexico, the United States and, indeed, the entire global community.

Thank you, Barack and Enrique, for all your hard work today and every day.

I'd now like to introduce the President of Mexico, Enrique Peña Nieto.

President Peña Nieto. Thank you very much, Prime Minister of Canada, Honorable Barack Obama. With this press conference, we come to an end of this day in Canada, today's state visit and today at the North American Leaders' Summit.

Prime Minister Trudeau, allow me to say once again how grateful I am for your hospitality, for the warmth with which we were received, myself and my delegation. We were warmly welcomed in this country. We're going back to Mexico with memories of the warm welcome that the Canadian people showed in Quebec, in Toronto, and Ottawa.

We're going back to Mexico fully convinced that we have renewed our bilateral relationship with Canada: Canada and yourself. Canada has a leader that is going back to universal values that make Canada stand out in the world.

President Barack Obama, I would like to say that we acknowledge your determination to have a more united, integrated, and competitive North America, a more prosperous and inclusive North America.

I would like to highlight, specifically being the last North American Leaders' Summit that you will attend to as a President of the United States, I would like to acknowledge that Mexico recognizes the fact that you have promoted, along Mexico, a strategic partnership, and you have always been willing to work towards a bilateral agenda that covers different fronts, beyond security. In the process of generating clean energy, you have favored those efforts. You have always favored a more expedited

trade, a safer border, more competitiveness in our trade. You have always been in favor of having cooperation in education and cultural matters, have always been willing to push technology and science forward.

But there is no doubt that your legacy also covers other regions of Latin America. You have reestablished a relationship with Cuba. You have supported the development of Central America. And in the Summit of the Americas, as well, you have contributed to its advancement.

We would like to acknowledge as well your tireless efforts made towards the investment of the environment and of addressing the challenges of global warming. There is no doubt that your Presidency has helped to build and reaffirm the candid relationship that the United States and Mexico have.

During this trilateral summit, the governments of Canada, the United States, and Mexico, we have reaffirmed our decision to work together with a vision, with resolve to advance economic integration in North America. In order to fulfill this goal, Mexico values that in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, there is a great opportunity to reaffirm this level of integration between the three countries that are part of NAFTA. But besides that, we are taking this opportunity to other regions of the world, specifically towards Asia.

I believe that the advantages, the benefits, and the beauties that this integration will carry and has carried along for the benefit of our societies can be extended when the Trans-Pacific Partnership is approved. Mexico supports this effort with enthusiasm. This partnership, this agreement is at the Senate, in the process of being approved. We are fully convinced that by working together and by taking stock of our complementarity, we can be the most competitive region in the world, as Prime Minister Trudeau has said during this summit.

We have worked on addressing four priorities: climate change, clean energies and environment, competitiveness at the borders, and trade security and defense, and regional and global issues. Specifically, Mexico addressed the area of competitiveness in trade and in our borders.

I would like to highlight some of the most important agreements. We're going to create single trade windows to enable our border exchanges. Our goal is to have one foreign trade single window for North America.

Secondly, we're going to map North American clusters. This will be a vital tool for decisionmaking and to bolster economic trade in the region. We have agreed to have a trilateral cluster map as soon as possible.

And thirdly, I should mention that trilateral program for trusted travelers. Mexico has proposed that this program uses global entry platform that Canada and the United States already have. And this year, we will implement the electronic kiosks platform that is already present in different airports in the United States and Canada. This system, end result, will be used in North America as a whole. And this will be a system that will enable and expedite the flow and transit of individuals in North America.

Finally, I would like to use an example to describe our level of integration: the preservation of the monarch butterfly conservation. This is a species that, in its pilgrimage, we can see how our countries are intertwined. And back in our last summit, we agreed that we would take care of this species and make sure that, in its journey, the monarch butterfly from Canada, flying through the United States all the way down to Mexico. And the figures speak for itself.

In the year 2014, in our country, the area where butterflies reached that—eventually reached only covered less than one hectare, 0.6 hectares. Due to the efforts made by our trilateral task force, created for that purpose last year, this year's—the surface in my country now extends to 4.1 hectares, and we are en route that by 2018, this figure would grow to 6 hectares, and eventually, that would be our goal for the monarch butterfly reserve in Mexico. And by that, we will be making sure the migration of this species is the symbol of the relationship that Canada, the United States, and Mexico have.

The North American Leaders' Summit bears witness that isolated national efforts are insufficient. If we want favorable results for the benefit of our societies, it is better to work together as a region. We all know that vis-a-vis global challenges, isolationism is not the solution. In contrast, with what happens in other corners in the world, the countries in North America, we have decided to be closer, to work as a team, and to complement each other and to make progress together as the most competitive region in the world.

Thank you very much.

Prime Minister Trudeau. President Obama.

President Obama. Well, good afternoon. *Bonjour. Buenas tardes.* I want to thank my friends and partners, Prime Minister Trudeau and President Peña Nieto. To Justin and the people of Ottawa and Canada, thank you for your wonderful hospitality.

This is my fourth North American Leaders' Summit and the first that Canada is hosting in nearly a decade. And this reflects the new commitment that Prime Minister Trudeau has brought to our shared vision of a strong and integrated North America. So thank you so much, Justin.

Terrorist Attack in Istanbul, Turkey

Let me start by once again commenting on the horrific terrorist attack that took place yesterday in Istanbul's main international airport, which is one of the busiest airports in the world. The prayers of the American people are with the people of Turkey, the people of Istanbul, and all those who were affected by this terrible crime. We have offered all assistance that we have available to our ally, Turkey, and we stand prepared to assist them during this difficult time.

We're still learning all the facts, but we know this is part of our broader, shared fight against terrorist networks, and we will continue to work closely with Turkey to root them out. And meanwhile, we're going to do what's necessary to protect our people. I'm confident that we can and we will defeat those who offer only death and destruction. And we will always remember, even as there are those who are trying to divide us, that we are stronger when we come together and work toward a better world together.

Canada-Mexico-U.S. Relations

We're reminded of this basic fact at this summit. Combined, our three nations are home to nearly 480 million people. We are bound together by family, including millions of immigrants who trace their roots to each other's countries. We're not only among each other's top trade partners, we are a global hub of innovation, with integrated economies and supply chains and coproduction that span our borders. On every security and global challenge, we are partners. And we're united by common values of democracy and pluralism and a commitment to human dignity.

Over the past 8 years, I've worked to strengthen our partnerships with our friends in the Americas, and that begins with strengthening our relationship with Canada and Mexico. During my administration, for example, we boosted U.S. exports to Canada and Mexico by about 50 percent. That supports about 2.8 million American jobs. And today, as Justin and Enrique described, we agreed to build on that progress in several key areas.

First, we agreed to make it even easier to do business together so that our region is even more competitive. We're bringing more advanced technologies and automation to our border crossings, which will reduce wait times for travelers and make it more affordable to trade. By the end of this year, we'll have a Single Trusted Traveler Program for all three of our countries, which will make it easier to travel, while at the same time improving security. We'll continue to align our standards and regulations, which is especially important for small businesses who want to export more. We're going to do more together to promote women entrepreneurs and minority-owned businesses to succeed as well, and we're going to keep expanding our educational exchanges among our students.

As has been mentioned, we discussed the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The politics of trade are always difficult in every country. I don't

know any country where there aren't going to be some folks who argue against trade, but we all believe that in a integrated global economy, the goal is not for us to try to shut ourselves off from the world, but rather to work together to raise standards around the world for workers and for the environment. And that's exactly what TPP does. It's the right thing to do. And we're going to keep working for it.

Given the flood of steel and aluminum on global markets, however, it points to the fact that free trade also has to be fair trade. And our three countries agreed to work together on a range of trade measures to enforce our rights and protect our workers and ensure a level playing field for the steel and aluminum industries here in North America. And given the vote of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, our economic teams are going to continue to work together so that we remain focused on keeping our economies growing and making sure that the global financial system is stable, something I'm confident that we can do.

Second, we're making sure that North America remains a leader in the fight against climate change. And I could not be prouder of the work that Justin and Enrique have done to help realize this important goal. All three of our nations are now committed to joining the Paris Agreement this year so we can bring it into force. We're announcing a new goal across our continents of generating 50 percent of our electricity with clean power by 2025, which is a bold goal, but is a eminently achievable goal. The United States Government is making a major commitment to purchase more clean energy for Federal facilities and more clean and efficient Government vehicles. And all three of our countries are committing to reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas sector by 40 to 45 percent by 2025.

Third, we're going to do more to make sure that we're looking after the safety and health of our citizens from the danger of illicit drugs. And we're particularly focused right now on the epidemic of opioid abuse, including heroin, that is taking so many lives and devastating so many families. Our teams will meet this fall to make sure that we're coordinating our efforts, including more access to treatment. And as always, we will continue to be relentless against the criminals and narcotraffickers that are inflicting so much violence on communities.

Fourth, we're deepening our cooperation on regional and global challenges: joint efforts against diseases like Zika; helping our Central American partners address poverty and violence that have led to so many families and children making an extraordinarily dangerous trip to flee difficult circumstances.

I want to thank Justin and Enrique for their governments' strong support of our new approach to Cuba. And I'm also glad that our countries have agreed to do more around the world to address the refugee crisis and expand our peacekeeping efforts.

In our own hemisphere, with the historic agreement in Colombia, a major step toward peace, our three nations are going to help the Colombians remove landmines as just one example of efforts to fortify what has been a very difficult negotiation.

And given the very serious situation in Venezuela and the worsening plight of the Venezuelan people, together we're calling on the Government and opposition to engage in meaningful dialogue and urge the Venezuelan Government to respect the rule of law and the authority of the National Assembly. Political prisoners should be released, the democratic process should be respected, and that includes legitimate efforts to pursue a recall referendum consistent with Venezuelan law.

In closing, we're determined to keep building on the progress that's been made at so many of the previous summits. And by the way, Enrique Enrique, I love the story about monarch butterflies. They're not just any species, they are spectacular. And we want to make sure that our children and our grandchildren can see them as well.

We're creating what we call the North American Caucus, which means our three governments will meet on a more regular basis. We're going to continue to deepen our trilateral cooperation in this hemisphere and around the world. And in short, we're going to do

more to speak with one, united North American voice on the world stage. We couldn't have better partners than Justin and Enrique. I'm confident that we're going to continue to advance regional cooperation and integration, and that's not just going to be good for our own people, that will be good for the world as well.

Merci beaucoup. Muchas gracias.

Prime Minister Trudeau's Director of Communications Kate Purchase. Thank you.

[*Ms. Purchase continued in French, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows*.]

So we're now ready to start with the question period.

[*Ms. Purchase continued in English as follows*.]

Our first question is from Canadian journalist Richard Madan from CTV News.

Trade/United Kingdom's Referendum Vote To Leave the European Union/Economic Globalization

Q. Hi. Good afternoon, gentlemen. One of the candidates who wants to replace President Obama has already said he wants to renegotiate NAFTA and walk away from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, all suggesting that perhaps there's a growing disconnect between the pro-trade message you're selling here and the protectionist voices we're hearing in the U.S. and possibly the Brexit in the U.K. So my question is to all three of you: What is your strategy to reverse this growing sentiment?

And, Prime Minister Trudeau, *en français aussi.* If the rest of you speak French, that's great. [*Laughter*]

[*Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Prime Minister Trudeau. First of all, our strategy is to highlight how much trade and positive agreements among our nations are good not only for the economy of the world and the economy of our countries, but it's also good for our citizens. We know that industries that export more goods pay salaries that are 50-percent higher than sectors that don't export. We also know that trade gives rise to good jobs, innovation, and progress for individuals as well.

In our conversations today and yesterday with President Peña Nieto, we signed agreements and held conversations that allowed us to remove visas for Mexican visitors to Canada. This will have effects on all Canadians who live in communities that welcome Mexican tourists. It will also allow Canadian agriculture producers to have access to the Mexican beef market.

These are examples of the cooperation that we say is good for the North American market, but also good for the entire world. And it's with this in mind that it's important to come together, to talk together about the future of this world, where we are more and more connected. And we have to agree more and more in this world.

[*Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in English as follows.*]

Our response to the kinds of protectionism that we're seeing around the world is indeed to highlight that when we come together like in events, like this North American Leaders' Summit, there's an opportunity to come together in ways that are beneficial for the global economy, that are beneficial for our countries' economies, but mostly, that are beneficial for individual citizens.

We know that export-intensive industries pay, on average, 50-percent higher wages than nonexporting industries. We know that trade leads to innovation and opportunities for communities, for individuals, for workers. Now, we need to make sure that we're dealing with challenges and problems as they come up, and that's where a constant, engaged dialogue comes with positive outcomes.

Just yesterday, with President Peña Nieto, we were able to establish forward movement on two difficult issues between our—not just our countries, but our peoples, which will have a beneficial impact on both sides of the deal. We will be lifting visas for visitors to Mexico—to

Canada from Mexico, which will have a positive impact on communities across country—the country as we welcome in tourists, but also, we've been able to secure access for Canadian farmers to sell their beef in Mexico.

These are good, concrete things that happen when we pull together and deal with important issues. And always, there will be people trying to get us all to turn inwards. But the fact is, our world is interconnected in so many ways, that it is much better that we engage, that we work through our challenges together because, really, that's how we end up with the kind of growth that benefits our countries and our citizens.

President Peña Nieto. I'll be very brief in addressing your question. There is sometimes that what one has, has not been valued enough until you lose them. And what this integration has managed to achieve in North America is precisely to give two or three countries more opportunities and to give our societies more opportunities by growing trade, by having more investment in our three countries.

In our three countries, we see opportunities growing and reaching out to more people. Academic exchanges and the possibility of studying abroad in any of the three countries represented here by three heads of state are outcomes of our trilateral agreements. I believe that we are all aware of how the reactions are of what happened in the U.K., and there's still uncertainty. The outcome of the referendum is uncertain. But when someone values what you had, that is when we see such reactions.

So we are here trying to innovate, to be more competitive. Why? Because we are competitors, yes, but we have complementary economies. And that would give more development to our societies. I believe that this is the main goal of our efforts. The agreements made here are not only agreements made by three heads of state. We are building roads, we're building the foundation so that our societies can have strong foundations and get—go further. And that makes a great contrast. When some other countries choose isolationism, they choose protectionistic measures, and they are not letting their societies project themselves to other kinds of scenarios.

President Obama. Well, let me make a couple of points. First of all, the integration of national economies into a global economy, that's here. That's done. And so the question is not whether or not there's going to be a international global economy. There is one: technology, travel, massive cargo containers that can ship goods back and forth; the fact that a company can move capital around the world in the blink of an eye; the fact that an engineer can send plans to the other side of the world in an instant to a colleague. Those are facts.

So we have an integrated economy already. The question is, under what terms are we going to shape that economy? And it is my firm belief that making sure that how we trade, how we exchange goods, it is my firm belief that shaping those in accordance with the values that our three countries care deeply about is going to be good for us and us trying to abandon the field and pull up the drawbridge around us is going to be bad for us.

Now, with respect to Brexit, I think it's important to point out that those who argued about leaving the European Union are the same folks who the very next day are insisting, don't worry, we're still going to have access to the single market. So, apparently, their argument was not against trade generally. They just didn't want any obligations—[*laughter*]—to go with the access to the free market. And it's important for us not to draw easy analogies between what happened in the U.K. and the EU versus what's happening between our three countries in terms of trade, or what's happening in terms of us attempting to access Asian markets through TPP. That's point number one.

Point number two: Ordinary people who have concerns about trade have a legitimate gripe about globalization, because the fact is that as the global economy is integrated, what we've seen are trend lines across the advanced economies of growing inequality and stagnant wages and a smaller and smaller share of overall productivity and growth going to workers and a larger portion going to the top 1 percent.

And that's a real problem. Because if that continues, the social cohesion and political consensus needed for liberal market economies starts breaking down.

So they're right to be concerned about that. I'm concerned about it, Justin is concerned about it, and Enrique is concerned about it. The question is, what do you do about it? And the prescription of withdrawing from trade deals and focusing solely on your local market, that's the wrong medicine: first of all, because it's not feasible, because our auto plants, for example, would shut down if we didn't have access to some parts in other parts of the world. So we'd lose jobs, and the amount of disruption that would be involved would be enormous. Secondly, we'd become less efficient. Costs of our goods in our own countries would become much more expensive.

And this nostalgia about an era when everybody was working in manufacturing jobs and you didn't need a college degree and you could go in and as long as you worked hard you could support a family and live a middle class life, that has been undermined far more by automation than it has been by outsourcing or the shift of jobs to low-income—or low-wage countries. I mean, the steel industry is producing as much steel in the United States as it ever was. It's just it needs one-tenth of the workers that it used to.

And this is why my pushback on both the left and the right when it comes to protectionism or antitrade arguments is, you are right to be concerned about the trends, but what you're prescribing will not work. And there's a better way of doing this. And the better way of doing it is, countries like ours that have high wage—high labor standards and high environmental standards and strong protection of intellectual property and rule of law, we've got to get out there and help to shape those rules so that they work for our workers and our businesses. Because if we don't, China will write the rules, and they may not have the same regard for the values that we care about. Other countries will write the rules in ways that disadvantage our workers and our businesses.

In Asia right now, there are a whole lot of tariffs that keep our products out, but because we happen to be some of the most open nations in the world, they're selling our stuff in. So we can't disengage; we ought to engage more. And if we combine that with investments in education and tax policies that are fair and making sure that college is affordable, and we're strengthening the safety net, and we're rebuilding our infrastructure—which are jobs that cannot be exported—and we're making investments in research and development, and we're building an inclusive society in which everybody has got a fair shot, that's how we're going to solve these problems.

And what is absolutely true is, is that too many folks who have been in charge around the world have neglected that side of the equation. So we're going to keep on pushing hard to shape an international order that works for our people. But we're not going to be able to do that by cutting off trade, because that's going to make all of us poorer.

[*Ms. Purchase spoke in French, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Ms. Purchase. Thank you. We can now take the second question. Daniel Venegas, Milenio.

U.S. Presidential Election/Mexico-U.S. Relations/Immigration

Q. Good afternoon. I would like to ask you, we have the election process going on in the United States. There is an anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican rhetoric by Donald Trump. I would like to ask you, did you address this issue during your meeting? And how can you ring fence the agreements that you have described and the positive outcomes of your trilateral relationship? What would happen if someone who is not in agreement—he has said it that NAFTA—they would step back from NAFTA. What did you address in your meetings? Thank you.

President Peña Nieto. I would like to begin by saying that we did address the issue and we have discussed it during the state visit.

Specifically, I would speak on behalf of Mexico. My Government will respect the election process, which is a domestic process for the United States. We are getting ready to work with whomever turns out to be President of the United States.

And the best way to ring fence the progress and agreements that have been made so far is to explain clearly and let the people feel the beauties and the benefits of all the work we do. Most of what we have today, it's not random. It might be a gift from God, but it is actually the outcome of our work of the foundations and the work we have done so far. And I believe that in the end of the day, what we managed to achieve today would teach us a lesson. It would be for the Americans to define who would provide them better guarantees to move into the path towards growth and development based upon what we have managed to build in the past.

President Obama. Well, I think Enrique is right. Whoever becomes the President of the United States is going to have a deep, strong interest in having a strong relationship with Mexico. It's our neighbor, our friend, and one of our biggest trading partners.

I think I've made myself clear, setting aside whatever the candidates are saying, that America is a nation of immigrants. That's our strength. Unless you are one of the First Americans, unless you are a Native American, somebody somewhere in your past showed up from someplace else. And they didn't always have papers. And the genius of America has been to define ourselves not by what we look like or what our last name is or what faith we practice, but our adherence to a common creed: a belief that all people are created equal; a belief in free speech and freedom of assembly and democracy and pluralism and tolerance and rule of law. And we have observed those ideals imperfectly at times, but in each successive generation, we've gotten a little bit better at it. We've come closer to our ideals.

And the notion that somehow we would stop now on what has been a tradition of attracting talent and strivers and dreamers from all around the world, that would rob us of the thing that is most special about America. And I don't think it will happen.

Now, people are genuinely concerned about immigration that is not orderly, people pouring across borders without having gone through some sort of process. It adds to people's sense that things are out of control. And that's why we've invested in securing our borders, and we've made unprecedented investments. It's part of the reason why illegal immigration to the United States is actually at its lowest level since the 1970s. It's why we so value the cooperation that we've obtained from the Mexican Government in making sure that our borders work to facilitate legal trade and legal immigration and commerce, but discourages illegal immigration.

It's why I'm pushing very hard, and will continue to push until I leave this office—and expect the next President to push—for a comprehensive immigration reform plan that can fix those aspects of the system that are broken so that we remain a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

And that's ultimately, I think, where people in the United States will land. We've had times throughout our history where anti-immigration sentiment is exploited by demagogues. It was directed at the Irish. It was directed at Poles and Italians. And you can go back and read what was said about those groups, and it's identical to what they're now saying about Mexicans or Guatemalans or Salvadorians or Muslims or Asians. Same stuff: "They're different." "They're not going to fit." "They won't assimilate." "They bring crime." Same arguments.

You go back to the 1800s, the language is identical. But guess what? They kept coming. And they kept coming because America offered possibility for their children and their grandchildren. And even if they were initially discriminated against, they understood that our system will, over time, allow them to become part of this one American family.

And so we should take some of this rhetoric seriously and answer it boldly and clearly. But you shouldn't think that that is representative of how the American people think.

Ms. Purchase. And now our third question from the United States, reporter Roberta Rampton from Reuters. Thank you.

President Obama. I should point out that Roberta is also secretly from Canada. [*Laughter*]

Q. Not so secretly. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. So Canadians are now getting an extra question. [*Laughter*]

U.S. Presidential Election/United Kingdom's Referendum Vote To Leave the European Union/Economic Globalization/United Kingdom-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Given how the Brexit vote shook the stability of the global economy, do you feel that you need to do more to calm the markets quickly and perhaps encourage a quick exit, rather than something that's long and drawn out? Do you still feel that the U.K. should be at the back of the queue for a trade deal with the United States? And are you going to make a full-throated pitch for the TPP, for your prescription, when you're out on the campaign trail this summer, stumping for Secretary Clinton?

And, Prime Minister Trudeau, both—I mean, you seem to be quite careful when you talk about Mr. Trump. Renegotiating NAFTA or tearing it up would be such a disaster for Canada. Why not come out and say that forcefully?

And, President Peña Nieto, in March you compared Mr. Trump to Hitler and Mussolini. I'm wondering if you still stand by that. And how worried are you that this time next year there will be a wall up on your border?

President Obama. Okay. [*Laughter*] Excellent questions, Roberta.

Prime Minister Trudeau. She doesn't sound Canadian. [*Laughter*] That was pretty mean. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. Canadians are a little more subtle. [*Laughter*]

I'm actually going to help out my friends a little bit on your last question, even though it wasn't directed at me, and just say, when I visit other countries, it's not my job to comment on candidates in the middle of a race, just because they may end up winning. And the relationship between governments tend to transcend whoever is in power at any given time. So it's a tough question. It's—I'm not saying they shouldn't answer it, I'm just—I'm helping them out a little bit. [*Laughter*] Because there's no doubt that when I visit countries, there are times where I've got preferences, but I'd rarely express them.

With respect to Brexit, first of all, I think you've seen the markets settle down a little bit over the last couple of days. I didn't follow the markets today. But we're monitoring very carefully whether there's any systemic strains on the system. And so far, what you've seen is reactions in the market, stock prices, currencies. But I think the preparations that were done by central banks and Finance Ministers, our Treasury Secretary, indicate the degree to which the global economy in the short run will hold steady.

I think there are some genuine longer term concerns about global growth if in fact Brexit goes through and that freezes the possibilities of investment in Great Britain or in Europe as a whole. At a time when global growth rates were weak already, this doesn't help.

And so when we attend the G–20 summit in China later this year, one of the major topics—which is something that I've continually advocated for during the 7½ years that I've been President—is we all have to look at what we can do to boost global demand: whether it's the United States adopting a more robust budget for infrastructure improvements and fixing water systems in Flint, Michigan, or repairing airports that are not as efficient as they should be or rebuilding our power grid so that it can take advantage of clean energy; whether it's Germany, a country with a surplus, doing more in terms of spending, or Europe as a whole lifting some of the austerity constraints that have been placed on them; whether it's China shifting to a more consumer-based, domestic-based growth strategy as opposed to trying to export its way out of problems. There are going to be a whole host of measures that all of us can take to fortify the global economy, and that should be a top priority of ours.

With respect to the actual Brexit negotiations, my main message to David Cameron, Angela Merkel and others is: Everybody should catch their breath, come up with a plan and a process that is orderly, that's transparent, that people understand, and then proceed, understanding that both sides have a stake in getting this right. And I think that that will be a difficult, challenging process, but it does not need to be a panicky process. I think it can be a steady, sensible process.

Obviously, leadership issues in Great Britain will need to be resolved for it to move as crisply and as effectively as it needs to, but that—I think that's recognized, and that should happen fairly quickly. And I know that, speaking with Chancellor Merkel, that her interest is not in retribution, her interest is in making sure that the process works. And I have a lot of confidence in people being able to do that. And we will help in any way that we can to facilitate that.

And then, the last part of your question is with respect to the U.K. and any trade agreement with the United States. Frankly, we will be the least of their problems right now, because their first order of business is going to be to address the market where they sell half their goods, which is Europe. And these things are not easily negotiated, particularly because we've been spending our time trying to negotiate with the European Union. And so to suddenly go off on another track will be challenging. But I think their first and primary concern is going to be to try to figure out how they interact with the European Union and the European market if in fact—and when in fact—they leave.

I have emphasized throughout, though, that the special relationship that we have with Great Britain does not change; that the ties of affection and family and language and institutions and culture and the business relationships that exist, those are so deep and so long lasting—the cooperation we have on security issues and on global challenges, those are so fundamental—that our relationship with the U.K. fundamentally doesn't change.

We are concerned that their absence from the European Union and the potential disruptions within Europe make it harder for us to solve some of the other challenges that have to be solved.

[*Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in English as follows.*]

Prime Minister Trudeau. One of the things that's easy to forget amid the inflated rhetoric of an election campaign is that the relationship between our three countries goes far deeper than any individual leaders. And if the three of us get along, it's not just because we're aligned in many different values and priorities, it is very much because we serve citizens who are, they themselves, tremendously aligned in terms of priorities, in terms of hopes and dreams, in terms of desire for success and ways to reach it.

So when you look at the level of integration, of our supply chains, of our markets, of the flow back and forward across borders of goods, of people, and the tremendous benefits that have come from proximity and strong relationships to individual citizens across this continent, it's essential that we understand that regardless of electoral rhetoric, Canada, the United States, and Mexico will continue to have tremendously close relationships economically, culturally, socially, familialy, historically, and towards the future.

So as I've said many times, and I'll say again, I look forward to working with whomever the American people choose to elect as their President in November. I know that we will always be able to find shared priorities and challenges that we want to work together to overcome. And I know that our commitment to doing what's right and what's best for our citizens will lead us to much more alignment than differentiation.

President Peña Nieto. Roberta, I'll go straight to the point to describe the stand of my administration and my own very personal point of view. I've said it, and I'll say it again: My Government will respect fully the domestic electoral process in the United States. I don't think I've said anything different from what I'm stat-

ing once again here. What I have said is that today—and I did not make reference to a specific place—my words reinforce what I believe.

I believe that in this global scenario—and I'll use President Obama's words, and as he said, he gave us a hand to address this question—we are facing a global reality. We have a populist world, an interconnected world with its own challenges. What I have said is that, in the world we're living, in different places, we have political leaders, political stakeholders that use demagoguery and have the populistic slogans that want to eliminate and destroy what has been built, what has taken decades to build to go back to problems of the past. And yes, it is true, all the benefits have not reached society as we whole. That is true. But those leaderships, those political actors, by using populism and demagoguery, they choose the easiest way to solve the challenges of today's world. And things are not that simplistic. It's not as easy as that. To lead a country, to take on a responsibility to rule a country, it goes beyond giving the easiest answer. It is complex and it is difficult to lead a country.

And I just said it: What we have reached so far—the level of development, the level of well-being that we have in the world—without a doubt makes contrast with what the situation that we lived 30 years back. Never before a global society—or the societies, at least, of our three countries—had lived the level of development and well-being that we enjoy today. Never before had our countries had a high life expectancy as we have today. Never before had we had the opportunity to have access to the knowledge of the world as fast and as easy as we do today. Never before were in such a level of connection between society and the possibility of having access to any product from any corner of the world as we do today. And that was built throughout the years by using the model based on openness, free trade, trade agreements.

And the biggest challenge today is to make sure that those benefits reach out to every single citizen. But the solution proposed by some is not by destroying what we have been built, it is not taking a different route to choose the road towards isolationism and destruction. What we need to do is to keep up the pace towards development. And when I said that, I mentioned that most of what some people say, it is very similar that in the past—and President Obama already said it, even years back—but in the past, some leaders addressed their societies in those terms. Hitler and Mussolini did that. And the outcome, it's clear to everyone: It resulted in devastation, and it turned out to be a tragedy for mankind. And we saw it last century.

That was my message when I made reference to this event. My message was about to value what we have and also to be aware of the road that we need to walk still. But that's the benefit that we're looking forward to: take the benefits to our societies.

[*Ms. Purchase spoke in English as follows.*]

Ms. Purchase. [*Inaudible*]—last question.

[*Ms. Purchase continued in French, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

The question will be from Mr. Philippe-Vincent Foisy of Cogeco News.

[*The reporter spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Canada-Mexico-U.S. Energy Cooperation/Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources/Populism/U.S. Presidential Election

Q. Mr. Trudeau, with the goals that you have said are ambitious for clean energy, does this mean the U.S. will import more hydroelectricity?

[*The reporter continued in English as follows.*]

[*Inaudible*]—to produce more clean energy, does it mean that the United States will have to import more hydroelectricity from Canada?

[*Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in English as follows.*]

Prime Minister Trudeau. Certainly, the agreement that we've concluded today values

our shift towards cleaner, renewable energy. Canada has a tremendous amount of energy that comes from clean sources right now. And we're always looking to create more.

How we work together as—not just as two countries, but as three countries—on energy solutions that give opportunities to our citizens while protecting future generations from the impacts of climate change is something that we are all entirely agreed on.

One of the things that we've learned—and this is through the Paris Agreement and through years of following different paths towards solutions—is, there is no one single solution to our energy challenges or to the challenges posed by climate change; that we need to be creative, we need to be innovative, and we need to work together. And that's why the conclusion of this ambitious continental energy strategy is so important in how we are going to do not just our share to combat the global challenge that is climate change, but to demonstrate leadership and show that clean energy and clean growth are exactly the solution and the opportunity that we face because of climate change.

[*Prime Minister Trudeau spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

It's true that the agreement that we came to today is very important because it allows us to fight climate change, but it's also very important when it comes to investing in green energy, clean growth, and our country. I know that we will have to pursue multiple, different solutions when it comes to clean energy, but cooperation and the collaboration that we've highlighted today among our three countries will give rise to innovative solutions that are positive in the area of green energy.

I can't wait to work with the United States and with Mexico in order that, together, we are able to face climate change challenges. It's not just a matter of doing our fair share, it's a matter of showing leadership in the world when it comes to climate change and clean energy. We have to do more than our share. We have to show that the future of the environment and the economy involves taking responsible decisions for the environment and green energy.

Thank you.

President Peña Nieto. Even when this question was addressed to the U.S. and Canada, I would like to say that Mexico, in this trilateral relationship, and as it has been mentioned here, we also are committed to clean energy. Mexico has revamped its legal framework so that, by 2024, at least 35 percent of the generation of energy is clean too. This is an agreement made in this trilateral meeting to reduce other pollutants like methane.

What I would like to say is that our three countries share the same agenda in environmental issues. We're—have agreed to protect our world and to find solutions that we're already working on.

President Obama. Well, Justin, I think, got it right, which is that we've set a goal and we are coordinating and synchronizing best practices. And there's going to be an energy mix in each of our countries that's going to be different. And some of it is going to be determined by what natural resources we have; it's going to be determined by how well we can integrate the grid and transmission of power.

So there may be some wonderful hydroelectric power that we'd like to get to the United States. The question is, are there enough transmission facilities for us to be able to buy it at a competitive price. Just as we develop wind energy, we have to build an infrastructure to get wind produced in South Dakota down to Chicago. And each of us, I think, are going to have national plans. But the point is that by setting these goals, creating these coordinating mechanisms, we're in a better position to take advantage of the confluence of interests and economies and opportunities.

And I view this clean energy sector as an enormous opportunity. Look, oil is cheap right now, but it's not going to be cheap. I've said this before: Those of you who are buying gas guzzlers, I'm telling you—[*laughter*]—because it is a finite resource and becomes more and more expensive to extract and people are taking climate change more and more seriously.

And so we're in a transition phase, but in the meantime, technology is moving. And solar and wind and hydro and biomass and entire technologies we haven't even thought of yet—there is some 15-year-old kid somewhere who is figuring it out. I don't know whether he's in Mexico or Canada or the United States or China or Saudi Arabia, but somebody is out there going to figure this out. And I want that opportunity to accrue to our workers, our people, our communities. And whoever wins this race is going to—everybody else is going to follow. And I believe that we have the brainpower and the architecture to lead. And we have such a huge market between our three countries that we can test out a lot of these opportunities and figure out which work best.

If you'll allow me, I want to say one last thing, though, because it's been a running thread in a bunch of questions, and that's this whole issue of populism. Maybe somebody can pull up in a dictionary quickly the phrase "populism," but I'm not prepared to concede the notion that some of the rhetoric that's been popping up is populist.

When I ran in 2008, and the reason I ran again, and the reason even after I leave this office I will continue to work in some capacity in public service is because I care about people and I want to make sure every kid in America has the same opportunities that I had. And I care about poor people who are working really hard and don't have a chance to advance. And I care about workers being able to have a collective voice in the workplace and get their fair share of the pie. And I want to make sure that kids are getting a decent education and a working mom has childcare that she can trust. And I think we should have a tax system that's fair and that folks like me who have been—have benefited from the incredible opportunities in my society should pay a little bit more to make sure that somebody else's kids who weren't as lucky have those same opportunities.

And I think there should be curbs on the excesses of our financial sector so that we don't repeat the debacles of 2007 and 2008. And I think there should be transparency in how our systems work so that we don't have people dodging taxes by setting up offshore accounts in other places and avoiding the responsibilities that their fellow citizens who don't have fancy lawyers and accountants, that they can't benefit from those same tricks.

Now, I suppose that makes me a populist. Now, somebody else who has never shown any regard for workers, has never fought on behalf of social justice issues or making sure that poor kids are getting a decent shot at life or have health care—in fact, have worked against economic opportunity for workers and ordinary people—they don't suddenly become a populist because they say something controversial in order to win votes. That's not the measure of populism. That's nativism or xenophobia or worse. Or it's just cynicism.

So I would just advise everybody to be careful about suddenly attributing to whoever pops up at a time of economic anxiety the label that they're populist. Where have they been? Have they been on the frontlines working on behalf of working people? Have they been carrying the laboring oar to open up opportunity for more people?

Now, there are people like Bernie Sanders who I think genuinely deserved the title, because he has been in the vineyards fighting on behalf of these issues. And there, the question is just going to be, all right, we share values, we share goals, how do we achieve them?

And I do think Enrique's broader point is right, which is, sometimes, there are simple solutions out there, but, I don't know, I've been President for 7½ years, and it turns out, that's pretty rare. [*Laughter*] And the global economy is one of those areas where there aren't a lot of simple solutions. And there aren't a lot of shortcuts to making sure that more people have opportunity in our countries. We are going to have to educate our kids better, and that takes time. We've got to make sure our manufacturing sector is more dynamic and competitive, and that takes time. We've got to restructure our Tax Codes to incentivize the right things and make sure workers are getting higher pay. That takes time. We've got to raise minimum wages. We've got to make sure that college is affordable. We have to restructure and

reform our financial sectors so they're not reckless, but we've got to do so in ways that don't destroy the entire system and throw millions of people suddenly out of work.

And when we bailed out the auto industry, that wasn't popular. So maybe I wasn't populist. But I tell you what, all those automakers—all those UAW members, both here in the United States and in Canada are pretty happy I did, even though it was—had about 10-percent popularity at the time—even in States like Michigan. So, I don't know, maybe that was an elitist move on my part because it didn't poll well. Last time I visited an auto plant, though, they were pretty happy.

So let's just be clear that somebody who labels "us" versus "them," or engages in rhetoric about how we're going to look after ourselves and take it to the other guy—that's not the definition of populism.

Sorry. [*Laughter*] This is one of the prerogatives of when you're at the end of your term, you just kind of—[*laughter*]—you go on these occasional rants. [*Laughter*]

[*Ms. Purchase spoke in French, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Ms. Purchase. And with this, we conclude our press conference.

[*Ms. Purchase continued in English as follows.*]

Thank you very much. *Merci. Muchas gracias.*

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 3:18 p.m. in the Atrium of the National Gallery of Canada. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; and Sen. Bernard Sanders, in his capacity as a Democratic Presidential candidate. Reporters referred to Donald J. Trump, chairman and president, Trump Organization, and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in their capacity as U.S. Presidential candidates. President Peña Nieto and a reporter spoke in Spanish, and another reporter spoke in French, and their remarks were translated by interpreters.

Joint Statement by President Obama, Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada, and President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico—Leaders' Statement on a North American Climate, Clean Energy, and Environment Partnership

June 29, 2016

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, President Barack Obama, and President Enrique Peña Nieto share a common commitment to a competitive, low-carbon and sustainable North American economy and society. The Paris Agreement was a turning point for our planet, representing unprecedented accord on the urgent need to take action to combat climate change through innovation and deployment of low-carbon solutions. North America has the capacity, resources and the moral imperative to show strong leadership building on the Paris Agreement and promoting its early entry into force. We recognize that our highly integrated economies and energy systems afford a tremendous opportunity to harness growth in our continuing transition to a clean energy economy. Our actions to align climate and energy policies will protect human health and help level the playing field for our businesses, households, and workers. In recognition of our close ties and shared vision, we commit today to an ambitious and enduring North American Climate, Clean Energy, and Environment Partnership that sets us firmly on the path to a more sustainable future.

Advancing Clean and Secure Power

We announce a historic goal for North America to strive to achieve 50 percent clean power generation by 2025. We will accomplish this goal through clean energy development and deployment, clean energy innovation and

energy efficiency. Building from ongoing efforts by our respective energy ministers through the North American Energy Ministerial Memorandum Concerning Climate Change and Energy Collaboration, a range of initiatives will support this goal, including:

- Scaling up clean energy through aggressive domestic initiatives and policies, including Mexico's Energy Transition Law and new Clean Energy Certificates, the U.S. Clean Power Plan and five-year extension of production and investment tax credits, and Canada's actions to further scale up renewables, including hydro.
- Collaborating on cross-border transmission projects, including for renewable energy. At least six transmission lines currently proposed or in permitting review, such as the Great Northern Transmission Line, the New England Clean Power Link, and the Nogales Interconnection, would add approximately 5,000 megawatts (MW) of new cross-border transmission capacity.
- Conducting a joint study on the opportunities and impacts of adding more renewables to the power grid on a North American basis.
- Enhancing trilateral collaboration on greening of government initiatives including the purchase of more efficient products, cleaner power, and clean vehicles.
- Strengthening and aligning efficiency standards across all three countries, facilitating the seamless movement of products, reducing pollution, and cutting costs for consumers. We commit to promote industrial and commercial efficiency through the voluntary ISO 50001 energy performance standard and to align a total of ten energy efficiency standards or test procedures for equipment by the end of 2019.
- Building on North American leadership in international forums such as Mission Innovation to accelerate clean energy innovation, our energy researchers will identify joint research and demonstration initiatives to advance clean technologies in priority areas such as: electricity grids and energy storage; reducing methane emissions; carbon capture, utilization and storage; and advanced heating and cooling, including energy efficiency in buildings.

Together, we estimate that the development of current and future projects and policies to achieve this goal will create thousands of clean jobs and support of our vision for a clean growth economy.

The three countries will continue to strengthen the North American Cooperation on Energy Information platform, by including additional geospatial information relating to cross-border infrastructure and renewable energy resources. We also commit to deepened electric reliability cooperation to strengthen the security and resilience of an increasingly integrated North American electricity grid.

Driving Down Short-Lived Climate Pollutants

Short-lived climate pollutants such as methane, black carbon, and hydrofluorocarbons are up to thousands of times more potent than carbon dioxide. Common sense actions to reduce these pollutants will deliver significant climate and health benefits in the near term and into the future, supporting our goal to limit global warming this century.

Today, Mexico will join Canada and the United States in committing to reduce their methane emissions from the oil and gas sector—the world's largest methane source—40% to 45% by 2025, towards achieving the greenhouse gas targets in our nationally determined contributions. To achieve this goal, the three countries commit to develop and implement federal regulations to reduce emissions from existing and new sources in the oil and gas sector as soon as possible. We also commit to develop and implement national methane reduction strategies for key sectors such as oil and gas, agriculture, and waste management, including food waste.

Finally, we pledge to continue collaborating with one another and with international partners as we commit to significant national actions to reduce black carbon emissions in North America, and promote alternatives to highly polluting hydrofluorocarbons.

Promoting Clean and Efficient Transportation

We recognize that fully realizing the promise of an integrated North American transportation network will require joint action that will create clean jobs while reducing energy consumption, greenhouse gases, and air pollution. Today, we commit to:

- Accelerating deployment of clean vehicles in government fleets;
- Working collaboratively with industry to encourage the adoption of clean vehicles by identifying initiatives to support consumer choice;
- Encouraging public and private infrastructure investments to establish North American refuelling corridors for clean vehicles;
- Working to align applicable regulations, codes and standards where appropriate;
- Fostering research, development, and demonstration activities for new clean technologies;
- Convening industry leaders and other stakeholders by spring 2017 as part of a shared vision for a competitive and clean North American automotive sector.

Canada, the U.S., and Mexico commit to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from light- and heavy-duty vehicles by aligning fuel efficiency and/or GHG emission standards out to 2025 and 2027, respectively. We further commit to reduce air pollutant emissions by aligning air pollutant emission standards for light- and heavy-duty vehicles and corresponding ultra low-sulphur fuel standards by 2018. In addition, we will encourage greener freight transportation throughout North America by expanding the SmartWay program to Mexico.

We recognize the significant contributions of our respective automotive industries and urge them to continue playing a leadership role in the development and deployment of clean and connected vehicles, innovating toward a shared vision of a green transportation future.

We support the adoption by all countries in 2016 of the market-based measure proposed through the International Civil Aviation Organization to allow for carbon-neutral growth from international civil aviation from 2020 onwards and will join the first phase of the measure adopted.

We are committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from maritime shipping and will continue to work together and through the International Maritime Organization to support implementation of a North American Emission Control Area that includes Mexico.

Protecting Nature and Advancing Science

The mainstreaming of conservation and sustainable biodiversity is a key component of sustainable development. Canada and the U.S. congratulate Mexico on its commitment to host the 13th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity under this theme. We will also work together to better integrate ocean observation systems, enhance early warning systems for natural disasters, and cooperate on marine protected areas.

We reaffirm our commitment to work collaboratively to achieve our long term goal of conserving North America's Monarch migratory phenomena and to ensure that sufficient habitat is available to support the 2020 target for the eastern Monarch population. Trilateral efforts to date have achieved significant successes across the range, including the restoration and enhancement of hundreds of thousands of acres of habitat. We look forward to continued progress and action in the future, building on the population increase for eastern monarchs observed in 2015.

We commit to collaborating with Indigenous communities and leaders to incorporate traditional knowledge in decision-making, including in natural resource management, where appropriate, and in advancing our un-

derstanding of climate change and climate resilience. We also recognize the importance of a gender-responsive approach to climate action and sustainable development.

Showing Global Leadership in Addressing Climate Change

Canada, the U.S., and Mexico will work together to implement the historic Paris Agreement, supporting our goal to limit temperature rise this century to well below 2°C, and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. We reaffirm our commitment to join the Agreement this year, and call on all nations to support its entry into force in 2016. As we implement our respective Nationally-Determined Contributions, we will cooperate on climate mitigation and adaptation, focusing in particular on highly integrated sectors, shared ecosystems, human health and disaster risk-reduction efforts. We will work together and with international partners to support developing country partners in their mitigation and adaptation efforts. We will also support robust implementation of the Paris Agreement's transparency and carbon markets-related provisions, and will develop mid-century, long-term low-greenhouse gas emissions development strategies this year.

Canada, the U.S., and Mexico affirm our commitment to adopt an ambitious and comprehensive Montreal Protocol hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) phase-down amendment in 2016, and to reduce use of HFCs, including through domestic actions. We call on all nations to support this goal.

We commit to phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies by 2025 and call on the other members of the G–20 to do the same. We also urge the G–20 to make commitments to reduce methane emissions in the oil and gas sector and to improve the environmental performance of heavy-duty vehicles.

Canada, the U.S., and Mexico will promote universal energy access and work together to address the challenges of energy security and integration, clean energy investment, and regional energy cooperation in the Caribbean and Central America.

Canada, the U.S. and Mexico will align approaches to account for the social cost of carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions when assessing the benefits of emissions-reducing policy measures.

The Action Plan that supports this Joint Statement further elaborates the various activities that the three countries are undertaking to meet their commitments.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to Minister of Natural Resources James G. Carr of Canada; and Secretary of Energy Pedro Joaquin Coldwell of Mexico. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on Congressional Passage of the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act
June 29, 2016

I commend Democrats and Republicans in the Senate for voting to address the economic crisis in Puerto Rico, providing the support it needs to restructure its debt, safeguard vital public services, and provide protection to public pensions. This bill is not perfect, but it is a critical first step toward economic recovery and restored hope for millions of Americans who call Puerto Rico home. I look forward to signing the bill into law and remain committed to working with Congress and the people of Puerto Rico to return to lasting economic growth and opportunity.

NOTE: The statement referred to S. 2328. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Joint Statement by President Obama and Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada on Softwood Lumber

June 29, 2016

Given the great importance of the softwood lumber industry to the economies of the United States and Canada, on March 10, 2016, we instructed the United States Trade Representative and the Canadian Minister of International Trade to intensively explore all options and report back on the key features that would address the issue.

In response to these instructions, our Ministers and their teams have been meeting diligently on softwood lumber over the past three months. These discussions have been challenging but productive.

A Vital Sector

The softwood lumber industry is a vital sector for both the United States and Canada, and bilateral trade and investment in softwood lumber is key to the competitiveness of our industries. The U.S. and Canadian federal governments have made significant advances in understanding our industries' sensitivities and priorities since March. The United States and Canada are working together to find a path forward that reflects our shared goals and that results in durable and equitable solutions for softwood lumber producers from both countries.

Canada has long been the largest source of imports of softwood lumber to the U.S. market and the United States is by far Canada's most important customer. Extensive cross-border investment also exists, with U.S. firms operating lumber mills in Canada and Canadian firms making investments in the United States. Firms in both countries also have worked jointly and in parallel to develop markets for softwood lumber.

Common Goals for Pursuing a New and Durable Agreement

A new softwood lumber agreement will need to reflect the realities of Canadian timber management policies and the U.S. domestic market. A new agreement must be equitable and provide a predictable business environment that gives producers on both sides of our border the ability to react confidently to changing market conditions. Any agreement must deliver a durable and equitable solution and benefit softwood lumber producers from Canada and the United States, related industries and consumers, and support the overall economic well-being of both countries. On the basis of discussions to date, our governments are committed to working to achieve such an agreement.

Key Features

Efforts to achieve such an outcome will be facilitated by focussing on the following key features:

- an appropriate structure, designed to maintain Canadian exports at or below an agreed U.S. market share to be negotiated, with the stability, consistency and flexibility necessary to achieve the confidence of both industries;
- provisions for region or company exclusions if justified;
- provisions promoting regional policies that eliminate the underlying causes of trade frictions, including a regional exits process that is meaningful, effective and timely, recognizing that should an exit be granted, it would be reversible if the circumstances justifying the exit change;
- provisions to ensure information collection and exchange to create meaningful transparency;
- institutional arrangements to administer the agreement;
- effective enforcement tools that are neutral, transparent, binding, expeditious,

and well-timed to address concerns as they arise;

- associated commitments regarding the use of trade remedies;
- provisions for appropriate duration and flexibility to anticipate and adapt to a range of market situations, industry innovations, and shifting demand patterns;
- provisions to address other issues, such as product scope, remanufacturers and joint market development.

Next Steps

The United States and Canada have made important progress in our negotiations, but significant differences remain regarding the parameters of the key features. Our governments will explore approaches to ensure effective management of the agreed market share. We are encouraged that both industries remain committed to working toward an agreement and will continue to consider ideas for achieving that objective. Our dialogue will continue and, building on the progress achieved to date, our Ministers will maintain an intensive pace of engagement with a view to achieving a mutually-acceptable agreement this fall, bearing in mind the expiration of standstill after October 12, 2016.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to Minister of International Trade Chrystia Freeland of Canada. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks to the Parliament in Ottawa, Canada
June 29, 2016

The President. Thank you. Please, everyone, have a seat. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Good evening. *Bonjour.* Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, Members of the House, Members of the Senate, distinguished guests, people of Canada: Thank you for this extraordinary welcome, which tempts me to just shut up and leave. [*Laughter*] Because it can't get any better than this. [*Laughter*] Obviously, I'm grateful for the warm welcome. I'm extraordinarily grateful for the close working relationship and friendship with your outstanding Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, and his extraordinary wife Sophie.

But I think it's fair to say that much of this greeting is simply a reflection of the extraordinary alliance and deep friendship between Canadians and Americans.

Justin, thank you for your very kind words and for the new energy and hope that your leadership has brought to your nation as well as to the alliance. My time in office may be nearing an end, but I know that Canada—and the world—will benefit from your leadership for years to come. So—[*applause*].

So Canada was the very first country that I visited as President. It was in February. [*Laughter*] It was colder. [*Laughter*] I was younger. [*Laughter*] Michelle now refers to my hair as the Great White North. [*Laughter*] And on that visit, I strolled around the ByWard Market, tried a "beaver tail"—[*laughter*]—which is better than it sounds. [*Laughter*] And I was struck then, as I am again today, by the warmth of Canadians. I could not be more honored to be joining you in this historic hall, this cathedral of freedom. And we Americans can never say it enough: We could not ask for a better friend or ally than Canada. We could not. [*Applause*] It's true. It is true. And we do not take it for granted.

That does not mean we don't have our differences. As I understand it, one of the reasons the Queen chose this site for Parliament was that it was a safe distance from America's border. [*Laughter*] And I admit, in the War of 1812, American troops did some damage to Toronto. I suspect that there were some people up here who didn't mind when the British returned the favor and burned down the White House. [*Laughter*]

In more recent times, however, the only forces crossing our borders are the armies of tourists and businesspeople and families who are shopping and doing business and visiting loved ones. Our only battles take place inside the hockey rink. [*Laughter*] Even there, there's an uneasy peace that is maintained. As Americans, we, too, celebrate the life of Mr. Hockey himself, the late, great Gordie Howe. Just as Canadians can salute American teams for winning more Stanley Cups in the NHL. [*Laughter*]

Audience members. Oooh! [*Laughter*]

The President. I told you I should have stopped after the applause. [*Laughter*]

But in a world where too many borders are a source of conflict, our two countries are joined by the longest border of peace on Earth. And what makes our relationship so unique is not just proximity. It's our enduring commitment to a set of values, a spirit, alluded to by Justin, that says no matter who we are, where we come from, what our last names are, what faith we practice, here we can make of our lives what we will.

It was the grit of pioneers and prospectors who pushed west across a forbidding frontier, the dreams of generations—immigrants, refugees—that were welcomed to these shores, the hope of runaway slaves who went north on an underground railroad. "Deep in our history of struggle," said Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Canada was the north star. . . . The freedom road links us together."

We're bound as well by the service of those who have defended us: at Flanders Field, the beaches of Normandy, in the skies of the Balkans, and more recently, in the mountains of Afghanistan and training bases in Iraq. And their sacrifice is reflected in the silent rows of Arlington and in the Peace Tower above us. And today we honor those who gave their lives for all of us.

We're linked together, as well, by the institutions that we've built to keep the peace: a United Nations to advance our collective aspirations; a NATO alliance to ensure our security; NORAD, where Americans and Canadians stand watch side by side and track Santa on Christmas Eve. [*Laughter*]

We're linked by a vast web of commerce that carries goods from one end of this continent to another. And we're linked by the ties of friendship and family, in my case, an outstanding brother-in-law from Burlington. [*Applause*] I had to give Burlington a shout-out. [*Laughter*] Our relationship is so remarkable precisely because it seems so unremarkable, which is why Americans often are surprised when our favorite American actor or singer turns out to be Canadian! The point is, we see ourselves in each other, and our lives are richer for it.

As President, I've deepened the ties between our countries. And because of the progress we've made in recent years, I can stand before you and say that the enduring partnership between Canada and the United States is as strong as it has ever been, and we are more closely aligned than ever before.

And yet we meet at a pivotal moment for our nations and for the globe. From this vibrant capital, we can look upon a world that has benefited enormously from the international order that we helped to build together, but we can see that same order increasingly strained by the accelerating forces of change. The world is, by most every measure, less violent than ever before, but it remains riven by old divisions and fresh hatreds. The world is more connected than ever before, but even as it spreads knowledge and the possibility of greater understanding between peoples, it also empowers terrorists who spread hatred and death, most recently in Orlando and Istanbul.

The world is more prosperous than ever before, but alongside globalization and technological wonders, we also see a rise in inequality and wage stagnation across the advanced economies, leaving too many workers and communities fearful of diminishing prospects, not just for themselves, but more importantly, for their children.

And in the face of such rising uncertainty, it is not enough to look at aggregate growth rates or stock prices or the pace of digital innovation. If the benefits of globalization accrue only to those at the very top, if our democracies seem incapable of assuring broad-based growth and opportunity for everyone, then people will

push back, out of anger or out of fear. And politicians—some sincere and some entirely cynical—will tap that anger and fear, harkening back to bygone days of order and predictability and national glory, arguing that we must rebuild walls and disengage from a chaotic world or rid ourselves of the supposed ills brought on by immigrants, all in order to regain control of our lives.

We saw some of these currents at work this past week in the United Kingdom's referendum to leave the European Union. Despite some of the initial reactions, I am confident that the process can be managed in a prudent, orderly way. I expect that our friends on both sides of the Channel will develop a workable plan for how to move forward. And I'm equally confident that the transatlantic values that we all share as liberal, market-based democracies are deeper and stronger than any single event.

But while the circumstances of Brexit may be unique to the United Kingdom, the frustrations people felt are not. The short-term fallout of Brexit can be sensibly managed, but the long-term trends of inequality and dislocation and the resulting social division, those can't be ignored. How we respond to the forces of globalization and technological change will determine the durability of an international order that ensures security and prosperity for future generations.

And fortunately, the partnership between the United States and Canada shows the path we need to travel. For our history and our work together speak to a common set of values to build on; proven values, values that your Prime Minister spoke of in his introduction: values of pluralism and tolerance, rule of law, openness; global engagement and commerce and cooperation, coupled with equal opportunity and an investment in our people at home. As Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau once said: "A country, after all, is not something you build as the pharaohs build the pyramids, and then leave standing there to defy eternity. A country is something that is built every day out of certain basic shared values." What is true of countries is true of the world. And that's what I want to talk about today: how to strengthen our institutions to advance these commitments in a rapidly changing world.

Now, let me start with our shared economic vision. In all we do, our commitment to opportunity for all of our people has to be at the centerpiece of our work. We are so fortunate because both of our countries are so well positioned to succeed in the 21st century. Our two nations know firsthand the awesome power of free markets and innovation. Canadians help run some of Silicon Valley's most innovative companies. Our students study at each other's world-class universities. We invest in research and development and make decisions based on science and evidence. And it works. It's what's created these extraordinary economies of ours.

But if the financial crisis and recent recession taught us anything, it's that economies do better when everyone has a chance to succeed. For a long time, it was thought that countries had to choose between economic growth or economic inclusion. But it turns out, that's a false choice. If a CEO makes more in a day than a typical employee makes in a year, that kind of inequality is not just bad for morale in the company. It turns out, it's bad for the economy: That worker is not a very good customer for business.

If a young man in Ohio can't pay his student loans or a young woman in Ontario can't pay her bills, that has ramifications for our economy. It tamps down the possibilities of growth. So we need growth that is broad and that lifts everybody up, including tax policies that do right by working families and robust safety nets for those who fall on hard times. As John Kenneth Galbraith once said, "The common denominator of progress" is our people. It's not numbers, it's not abstractions, it's how are people doing?

Of course, many who share this progressive, inclusive vision can be heard now arguing that investments in our people, protections for our workers, fair tax policies, these things are not enough. For them, globalization is inherently rigged towards the top 1 percent, and therefore, what's needed is an end to trade agreements and various international institutions

and arrangements that integrate national economies.

And I understand that vision. I know why it's tempting. It seems as if, if we draw a line around our borders that it will give us more control, particularly when the benefits of trade and economic integration are sometimes hard to see or easy to take for granted and the very specific dislocations are obvious and real.

There's just one problem: Restricting trade or giving in to protectionism in this 21st-century economy will not work. [*Applause*] It will not work. We—even if we wanted to, we can't seal ourselves off from the rest of the world. The day after Brexit, people looked around and said, "Oh!" [*Laughter*] "How is this going to work?" The drag that economic weakness in Europe and China and other countries is having on our own economies right now speaks to the degree to which we depend—our economies depend, our jobs, our businesses depend—on selling goods and services around the world.

Very few of our domestic industries can sever what is now truly a global supply chain. And so for those of us who truly believe that our economies have to work for everybody, the answer is not to try and pull back from our interconnected world; it is rather to engage with the rest of the world, to shape the rules so they're good for our workers and good for our businesses.

And the experience between our two nations points the way. The United States and Canada have the largest bilateral trade and investment relationship in the world, and we are stronger for it. It means a company in Quebec can create jobs in North Carolina. And a startup in Toronto can attract investment from Texas. Now, the problem is that some economies in many of the fastest growing regions of the world—particularly the Asia-Pacific region—don't always abide by the same rules. They impose unfair tariffs, or they suppress workers' rights, or they maintain low environmental standards that make it hard for our businesses to compete fairly.

And with the Trans-Pacific Partnership, we have the ability to not only open up these markets to U.S. and Canadian products and eliminate thousands of these unfair tariffs, which, by the way, we need to do because they're already selling here under existing rules, but we're not selling as much as we should over there. But it also affords us the opportunity to increase protections for workers and the environment and promote human rights, including strong prohibitions against human trafficking and child labor. And that way, our workers are competing on a level playing field, and our businesses are less prone to pursue a race to the bottom. And when combined with increased investments in our own people's education and skills and training and infrastructure and research and development and connectivity, then we can spur the kind of sustained growth that makes all of us better off. [*Applause*] All of us.

The point is, we need to look forward, not look backward. And more trade and more people-to-people ties can also help break down old divides. I thank Canada for its indispensable role in hosting our negotiations with the Cuban Government and supporting our efforts to set aside half a century of failed policies to begin a new chapter with the Cuban people. I know a lot of Canadians like going to Cuba—[*laughter*]—maybe because they haven't had Americans crowding the streets and the beaches. But that's changing. [*Laughter*] And as more Americans engage with the Cuban people, it will mean more economic opportunity and more hope for ordinary Cubans.

We also agree, us Americans and Canadians, that wealthy countries like ours cannot reach our full potential while others remain mired in poverty. That, too, is not going to change in this interconnected world; that if there is poverty and disease and conflict in other parts of the world, it spills over, as much as we'd like to pretend that we can block it out.

So, with our commitment to new sustainable development goals, we have the chance to end the outrage of extreme poverty. We can bring more electricity to Africa so that students can study at night and businesses can stay open. We can banish the scourge of malaria and Zika. We can realize our goal of the first AIDS-free generation. We can do that. It's within our

grasp. And we can help those who are working to replace corruption with transparent, accountable institutions that serve their people.

As leaders in global development, the United States and Canada understands that development is not charity, it's an investment in our future prosperity. Because not only do such investments and policies help poor countries, they're going to create billions of customers for U.S. and Canadian products, and they'll make less likely the spread of deadly epidemics to our shores, and they'll stabilize parts of the world that threaten the security of our people.

In fact, both the United States and Canada believe our own security, and not just prosperity, is enhanced when we stand up for the rights of all nations and peoples to live in security and peace. And even as there are times when unilateral action is necessary to defend our people, we believe that in a world where wars between great powers are far less likely, but transnational threats like terrorism know no boundaries, our security is best advanced when nations work together. We believe that disputes that do arise between nations should be, wherever possible, resolved peacefully, with diplomacy; that international organizations should be supported; that multilateralism is not a dirty word.

And certainly, we're more secure when we stand united against terrorist networks and ideologies that have reached to the very doorstep of this hall. We honor all those taken from us by violent extremists, including Canadians John Ridsdel and Robert Hall. And with Canada's additional contributions, including training Iraqi forces, our coalition is on the offensive across Iraq, across Syria. And we will destroy the terrorist group ISIL. We will destroy them.

We'll continue helping local forces in sharing intelligence, from Afghanistan to the Philippines, so that we're pushing back comprehensively against terrorist networks. And in contrast to the hatred and the nihilism of terrorists, we'll work with partners around the world, including, particularly, Muslim communities, to offer a better vision and a path of development and opportunity and tolerance. Because they are—and must be—our partners in this effort.

Meanwhile, when nations violate international rules and norms—such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine—the United States and Canada stand united, along with our allies, in defense of our collective security. And doing so requires a range of tools, like economic sanctions, but it also requires that we keep our forces ready for 21st-century missions and invest in new capabilities. And as your ally and as your friend, let me say that we'll be more secure when every NATO member, including Canada, contributes its full share to our common security. Because the Canadian Armed Forces are really good, and if I can borrow a phrase, the world needs more Canada. NATO needs more Canada. We need you. [*Applause*] We need you.

Now just as we join together in our common defense, so must we work together diplomatically, particularly to avert war. In diplomacy, results are rarely quick, but it turns out even the most intractable conflicts can be resolved. Here in our own hemisphere, just in the last few weeks, after half a century of war, Colombia is poised to achieve a historic peace. And the nations of North America will be an important partner to Colombia going forward, including working to remove landmines.

Around the world, Canadian and American diplomats working together can make a difference. Even in Syria, where the agony and the suffering of the Syrian people tears at our hearts, our two nations continue to be leaders in humanitarian aid to the Syrian people. And although a true resolution of this conflict so far has eluded us, we know that the only solution to this civil war is a political solution so that the Syrian people can reclaim their country and live in peace. And Canadians and Americans are going to work as hard as we can to make that happen. I should add that here in the nation of Lester Pearson, we reaffirm our commitment to keep strengthening the peacekeeping that saves lives around the world.

There is one threat, however, that we cannot solve militarily, nor can we solve alone, and that's the threat of climate change. Now,

climate change is no longer an abstraction. It's not an issue we can put off for the future. It is happening now. It is happening here, in our own countries. The United States and Canada are both Arctic nations, and last year, when I became the first U.S. President to visit the Arctic, I could see the effects myself. Glaciers, like Canada's Athabasca Glacier, are melting at alarming rates. Tundra is burning. Permafrost is thawing. This is not a conspiracy. [*Laughter*] It's happening. Within a generation, Arctic sea ice may all but disappear in the summer.

And so skeptics and cynics can insist on denying what's right in front of our eyes. But the Alaska Natives that I met, whose ancestral villages are sliding into the sea, they don't have that luxury. They know climate change is real. They know it is not a hoax. And from Bangladesh to the Pacific islands, rising seas are swallowing land and forcing people from their homes. Around the world, stronger storms and more intense droughts will create humanitarian crises and risk more conflict. This is not just a moral issue, not just a economic issue, it is also an urgent matter of our national security.

And for too long, we've heard that confronting climate change means destroying our own economies. But let me just say, carbon emissions in the United States are back to where they were two decades ago, even as we've grown our economy dramatically over the same period. Alberta, the oil country of Canada, is working hard to reduce emissions while still promoting growth.

So if Canada can do it and the United States can do it, the whole world can unleash economic growth and protect our planet. We can do this. [*Applause*] We can do it. We can do this. We can help lead the world to meet this threat.

Already, together in Paris, we achieved the most ambitious agreement in history to fight climate change. Now let's bring it into force this year. With our agreement with Mexico that we announced today, let's generate half the electricity on this continent from clean energy sources within a decade. That's achievable. Let's partner in the Arctic to help give its people the opportunity they deserve, while conserving the only home they know. And building on the idea that began in Montreal three decades ago, let's finally phase down dangerous HFC greenhouse gases. This is the only planet we've got. And this may be the last shot we've got to save it. And America and Canada are going to need to lead the way. We're going to have to lead the way.

Just as we're joined in our commitment to protecting the planet, we are also joined in our commitment to the dignity of every human being. We believe in the right of all people to participate in society. We believe in the right of all people to be treated equally, to have an equal shot at success. That is in our DNA, the basic premise of our democracies.

I think we can all agree that our democracies are far from perfect. They can be messy, and they can be slow, and they can leave all sides of a debate unsatisfied. Justin is just getting started. [*Laughter*] So in case you hadn't figured that out, it's where this gray hair comes from. [*Laughter*] But more than any other system of government, democracy allows our most precious rights to find their fullest expression, enabling us, through the hard, painstaking work of citizenship, to continually make our countries better, to solve new challenges, to right past wrongs.

And, Prime Minister, what a powerful message of reconciliation it was—here and around the world—when your government pledged a new relationship with Canada's First Nations.

Democracy is not easy. It's hard. Living up to our ideals can be difficult even in the best of times. And it can be harder when the future seems uncertain or when, in response to legitimate fears and frustrations, there are those who offer a politics of "us" versus "them," a politics that scapegoats others: the immigrant, the refugee, someone who seems different than us. We have to call this mentality what it is: a threat to the values that we profess, the values we seek to defend.

It's because we respect all people that the world looks to us as an example. The colors of the rainbow flag have flown on Parliament Hill. They have lit up the White House. That is a testament to our progress, but also the work

that remains to ensure true equality for our fellow citizens who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

Our Muslim friends and neighbors who run businesses and serve in our governments and in our armed forces and are friends with our children and play on our sports teams, we've got to stand up against the slander and the hate leveled against those who look or worship differently. That's our obligation. That's who we are. That's what makes America special. That's what makes Canada special. Here. [*Applause*] Here in Canada.

Here in Canada, a woman has already risen to the highest office in the land. In America, for the first time, a woman is the presumptive nominee of a major party and perhaps President. I have a bias on these issues—[*laughter*]—but our work won't be finished until all women in our country are truly equal: paid equally, treated equally, given the same opportunities as men, when our girls have the same opportunities as our boys. That's who we need to be.

And let me say this, because I don't feel particularly politically correct on this issue—[*laughter*]—I don't believe that these are American values or Canadian values or Western values. I believe, and Justin believes, and I hope all of you believe, these are universal values. And we must be bold in their defense, at home and around the world. And not shy away from speaking up on behalf of these values of pluralism and tolerance and equality.

I fear sometimes that we are timid in defense of these values. That's why I will continue to stand up for those inalienable rights, here in our own hemisphere—in places like Cuba and Venezuela—but also in more distant lands: for the rights of citizens in civil society to speak their mind and work for change, for the rights of journalists to report the truth, for the rights of people of all faiths to practice their religion freely. Those things are hard, but they're right. They're not always convenient, but they're true.

In the end, it is this respect for the dignity of all people, especially the most vulnerable among us, that perhaps more than anything else binds our two countries together. Being Canadian, being American, is not about what we look like or where our families came from. It is about our commitment to a common creed. And that's why, together, we must not waver in embracing our values, our best selves. And that includes our history as a nation of immigrants, and we must continue to welcome people from around the world.

The vibrancy of our economies are enhanced by the addition of new, striving immigrants. But this is not just a matter of economics. When refugees escape barrel bombs and torture and migrants cross deserts and seas seeking a better life, we cannot simply look the other way. We certainly can't label as possible terrorists vulnerable people who are fleeing terrorism.

We can insist that the process is orderly. We can insist that our security is preserved. Borders mean something. But at moments like this, we are called upon to see ourselves in others, because we were all once strangers. If you weren't a stranger, your grandparents were strangers. Your great-grandparents were strangers. They didn't all have their papers ready. They fumbled with language, faced discrimination, had cultural norms that didn't fit. At some point, somewhere, your family was an outsider. And so the mothers, the fathers, the children we see today, they're us. And we can't forsake them.

So, as Americans and Canadians, we will continue to welcome refugees, and we can ensure that we're doing so in a way that maintains our security. We can and we will do both. [*Applause*] We can and we will do both.

We're increasing our support to Central America so that fewer families and children attempt the dangerous journey north. This fall at the United Nations, we'll host a global summit on refugees, because in the face of this crisis, more nations need to step up and meet our basic obligations to our fellow human beings. And it will be difficult, and budgets are tight, and there are legitimate issues, and not everybody is going to be helped. But we can try. People of good will and compassion show us the way.

Greek islanders pulling families to shore. And Germans handing out sweets to migrants at railway stations. A synagogue in Virginia inviting Syrian refugees to dinner. And here, in Canada, the world has been inspired as Canadians across this country have opened up their hearts and their homes. And we've watched citizens knitting tuques to keep refugees warm in the winter. [*Laughter*] And we've seen your Prime Minister welcome new arrivals at the airport and extend the hand of friendship and say, "You're safe at home now."

And we see the refugees who feel that they have a special duty to give back and seize the opportunity of a new life. Like the girl who fled Afghanistan by donkey and camel and jet plane and who remembers being greeted in this country by helping hands and the sound of robins singing. And today, she serves in this Chamber and in the Cabinet, because Canada is her home.

A country "is not something you build as the pharaohs built the pyramids . . . a country is something that is built every day out of certain basic shared values." How true that is. How blessed we are to have had people before us, day by day, brick by brick, build these extraordinary countries of ours. How fortunate, how privileged we are to have the opportunity to now, ourselves, build this world anew. What a blessing. And as we go forward together on that freedom road, let's stay true to the values that make us who we are: Canadians and Americans, allies and friends, now and forever.

Thank you very much. *Merci beaucoup.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:03 p.m. in the House of Commons Chamber. In his remarks, he referred to Speaker of the House of Commons Geoff Regan, former Prime Minister Kim Campbell, and Minister of Democratic Institutions and Member of Parliament Maryam Monsef of Canada; Sophie Grégoire-Trudeau, wife of Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada; John Ridsdel and Robert Hall, Canadian citizens who were killed by the Abu Sayyaf terrorist organization in the Philippines in February and June, respectively, after being abducted from a marina near the city of Davao in September 2015; his brother-in-law Konrad Ng; and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in her capacity as a U.S. Presidential candidate. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks on Signing the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 and the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act
June 30, 2016

Well, even in the midst of political season, every once in a while, Congress moves forward on something that is really significant and important. And I want to make sure that the American public are aware of what I'm going to be signing here today.

The first piece of legislation relates to the Freedom of Information Act. As all of you know, the Freedom of Information Act is one of the key ways in which citizens are able to find out what exactly is going on in Government. And the good news is, is that over the course of my Presidency, we have processed more FOIA requests—Freedom of Information requests—than ever before. And we have worked to make it easier and more transparent, putting more and more stuff online.

But having said all that, we're actually getting many more requests for FOIA than ever before. And so we've had to figure out ways that we can reform this to make it easier, faster, cheaper for people to get the information that they want.

Fortunately, Congress—on a bipartisan basis—has provided the tools, through legislation, to codify some of the reforms we've already made and to expand more of these reforms so that Government is more responsive. And I am very proud of all the work we've done to try to make Government more open

and responsive, but I know that people haven't always been satisfied with the speed with which they're getting responses and requests. Hopefully, this is going to help, and it will be an important initiative for us to continue on the reform path.

So I'm going to sign that right now.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

The second piece of legislation relates to the crisis that we're seeing in Puerto Rico. We've got millions of our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico who have been suffering under one of the worst financial crises, fiscal crises in memory. And as a consequence of the inability for them to restructure their debt, you've seen hospitals unable to operate, ambulances shutting down, basic services shutting down, and government workers not being paid. It has brought enormous hardship to Puerto Rico.

Through some amazing work by our Treasury Department, our legislative staff, and a bipartisan effort in both the House and the Senate, we finally have legislation that at least is going to give Puerto Rico the capacity, the opportunity to get out from under this lingering uncertainty with respect to their debt and start stabilizing government services and to start growing again.

It's not, in and of itself, going to be sufficient to solve all the problems that Puerto Rico faces, but it is a important first step on the path of creating more stability, better services, and greater prosperity over the long term for the people of Puerto Rico.

So I want to thank all four leaders in Congress for the hard work in getting this to my desk. And I want to let the people of Puerto Rico know that although there's still some tough work that we're going to have to do to dig Puerto Rico out of the hole that it's in, this indicates how committed my administration is to making sure that they get the help they need. And it's not going to stop here; we've got to keep on working to figure out how we promote the long-term growth and sustainability that's so desperately needed down there. But the people of Puerto Rico need to know that they're not forgotten, that they're part of the American family. And Congress's responsiveness to this issue—even though this is not a perfect bill—at least moves us in the right direction.

[*The President signed the bill.*]

Okay, thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:36 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. S. 337, approved June 30, was assigned Public Law No. 114–185. S. 2328, approved June 30, was assigned Public Law No. 114–187.

Appendix A—Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this book.

January 1

In the morning, the President traveled to Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe Bay, HI.

In the afternoon, the President returned to his vacation residence in Kailua, HI. Later, he and Mrs. Obama traveled to Waikiki, HI.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to their vacation residence in Kailua, where they remained overnight.

During the day, the President had an intelligence briefing.

January 2

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Bellows Air Force Station in Waimanalo, HI. Later, they returned to their vacation residence in Kailua, HI, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President and his daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Honolulu, HI, where they visited his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng. Then, they and Ms. Soetoro-Ng's daughters Suhaila and Savita Ng traveled to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. Then, they traveled to the East-West Center. Later, they visited the Honolulu Zoo. Then, the President and his daughters returned to their vacation residence in Kailua, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following afternoon.

During the day, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President declared an emergency in Missouri and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, and flooding beginning on December 22, 2015, and continuing.

January 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President declared a major disaster in Mississippi and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, and flooding from December 23 through 28, 2015.

January 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Blue Room, the President met with citizens affected by gun violence prior to delivering remarks on gun violence prevention efforts.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter.

During the day, the President was briefed on the death of S. Sgt. Matthew McClintock, USA, in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

January 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Also in the morning, the President was briefed on the nuclear test conducted by North Korea.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi of Iraq to congratulate him on Iraqi forces' recent success in their effort to retake Ramadi from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization and underscore continuing U.S. support. They also discussed Iraq's economic

stabilization efforts and the need to improve the structural integrity of the Mosul Dam, as well as regional issues, including Saudi Arabia's execution of Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr and Iraq-Turkey relations. He also had separate telephone conversations with President Park Geun-hye of South Korea and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan to discuss the international response to North Korea's nuclear test and congratulate the two leaders on the recent South Korea-Japan agreement to resolve the World War II–era "comfort women" issue.

Also during the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough, Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman, and National Economic Council Director Jeffrey D. Zients.

January 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, the President traveled to Fairfax, VA. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

January 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a conference call with grassroots supporters to discuss gun violence prevention efforts. Then, also in the Oval Office, he participated in promotion ceremonies for Cmdr. Jillian C. Malzone, USCG, and Lt. Col. Andrew C. Steadman, USA, Military Aides to the President, and met with members of their families.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Malcolm B. Turnbull of Australia to the White House on January 19.

January 9

The White House announced that the President will travel to Omaha, NE, on January 13.

January 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, starting in the Grand Foyer, the President recorded an interview with Matt Lauer of NBC's "Today" program for later broadcast.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Baton Rouge, LA, on January 13 and 14.

The President announced his intention to nominate Todd A. Weiler to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Nelson Reyneri to be a member of the Board of Directors for the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kelly Keiderling-Franz to be Ambassador to Uruguay.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stephen M. Schwartz to be Ambassador to Somalia.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the Board of Directors for the National Association of Registered Agents and Brokers:

Raymond G. Farmer;
Thomas McLeary;
Michael J. Rothman; and
Heather A. Steinmiller.

The President announced his intention to nominate J. Mark McWatters to be a member of the Board of Directors for the Export-Import Bank of the United States.

The President announced his intention to appoint Thomas M. Gallas as a member of the National Capital Planning Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Ethel Brooks, Sara Darehshori, and Norman L. Eisen as members of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

January 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President posted a live video preview of his State of the Union Address to his Facebook feed.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of Jimmy Morales as President of Guatemala in Guatemala City, Guatemala, on January 14:

Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (head of delegation);
Todd Robinson;
Jeh C. Johnson;
Thomas R. Carper;
Norma Torres;
Thomas A. Shannon; and
Mark Feierstein.

The President announced the nomination of Winfield D. Ong to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana.

The President announced the nomination of Myra C. Selby and Donald K. Schott to be judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

January 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

Also in the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia to discuss the importance of working toward a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Ukraine through full implementation of the Minsk agreements by all parties, the situation in Syria, including diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict and the urgent humanitarian needs of the Syrian people, and the necessity for a strong and united international response to North Korea's recent nuclear test in defiance of Security Council resolutions.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Joint Base Andrews, MD, where he met with King Abdullah II of Jordan. Then, he traveled to Omaha, NE. Upon arrival, he traveled to Papillion, NE, where he visited with Lisa Martin, who had written him a letter on her concerns as a new mother, her husband Jeff, and their son Cooper. Then, he visited with some local neighborhood residents before leaving for the Baxter Arena in Omaha.

In the evening, the President traveled to Baton Rouge, LA. Upon arrival, he traveled to the Holiday Inn Baton Rouge hotel, where he remained overnight.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Nicholas L. Saban of the University of Alabama football team to congratulate him on his team's victory in the 2015 College Football Playoff National Championship.

January 14

In the morning, from Room A111 of McKinley Senior High School in Baton Rouge, LA, the President participated in a Twitter question-and-answer session.

In the afternoon, while en route to the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport, the President stopped at Poor Boy Lloyd's restaurant, where he purchased sandwiches and visited with patrons. Then, he returned to Washington, DC.

During the day, the President met with Ben Simmons, a freshman on the Louisiana State University basketball team.

January 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico to congratulate him on the arrest of Sinaloa drug cartel leader Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzmán Loera and review broader security and economic issues, including the importance of taking steps to advance the approval of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Then, in the Private Dining Room, he and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the East Room, he recorded separate live interviews with YouTube hosts Destin Sandlin, Ingrid Nilsen, and Adande "Swoozie" Thorne for online broadcast.

Later in the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President met with the National

Security Council to discuss the campaign to degrade and destroy the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. The President was briefed on recent progress by Iraqi security forces in taking back Ramadi and ways in which the Global Coalition To Counter ISIL can continue to accelerate and integrate the military campaign on all possible fronts in Iraq and Syria.

The White House announced that the President will award National Medal of Science and National Medal of Technology and Innovation to 17 scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and innovators on January 22.

The President declared a major disaster in Washington and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, straight-line winds, flooding, landslides, and mudslides from November 12 through 21, 2015.

January 16

In the evening, at the Oyamel Cocina Mexicana restaurant, the President and Mrs. Obama had dinner.

The President declared an emergency in Michigan in response to a request from the Governor submitted on January 14 and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts due to the emergency conditions in the area affected by contaminated water.

January 17

The White House announced that the President will travel to Detroit, MI, on January 20.

January 18

In the afternoon, at the Leckie Elementary School, the President and Mrs. Obama participated in a community service event in commemoration of Martin Luther King, Jr., Day. Wendy Spencer, Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service, also attended.

January 19

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to express his condolences for and condemnation of the January 12 terrorist attack in Istanbul, pledge continued cooperation in the fight against terrorism, including degrading and ultimately destroying the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, and discuss the recent string of attacks against Turkish security forces by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the urgent need for deescalation.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Prime Minister Malcolm B. Turnbull of Australia had a working lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry.

During the day, the President met with Mayor Karen Williams Weaver of Flint, MI, to discuss the city's contaminated tap water supply and efforts to restore access to safe water for residents, including Federal emergency assistance.

January 20

In the morning, the President traveled to Detroit, MI, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Jolly Pumpkin Pizzeria and Brewery, where he had lunch with Mayor Michael E. Duggan of Detroit, Shinola Founder Tom Kartsotis, Henry Ford Health System emergency physician Tolulope Sonuyi, and United Automobile Workers (UAW) Local 22 member and General Motors Co. employee Teana Dowdell. Later, he visited Shinola's flagship storefront adjacent to the restaurant. Then, he traveled to the Cobo Center, where he met with North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) Chairman Paul Sabatini, Cochair Sam Slaughter, and Executive Director Rod Alberts, followed by a tour of NAIAS exhibits with Chairman Sabatini, UAW President Dennis Williams, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles Vice President of Vehicle Engineering Mitch Clauw, General Motors Co. President Daniel L. Amman, and Chevrolet Bolt EV specialist Patrick Foley. Later, also at the Cobo Center, he recorded an interview with Lee Cowan of CBS News for later broadcast.

Later in the afternoon, in the Hi-Bay Training Room at the UAW–GM Center for Human

Resources, the President continued his interview with Lee Cowan of CBS News. Then, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

January 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to offer his condolences for the loss of German life in the January 12 terrorist attack in Istanbul, Turkey, discuss the European response to the influx of Middle Eastern and North African refugees, underscore the importance of global efforts to address the humanitarian crisis in Syria, and review the situation in Ukraine.

The White House announced that the National Medal of Science and National Medal of Technology and Innovation presentation ceremony scheduled for January 22 would be postponed due to inclement weather.

The President declared a major disaster in Missouri and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, and flooding from December 23, 2015, to January 9, 2016.

The President declared a major disaster in Alabama and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, and flooding from December 23 through 31, 2015.

January 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President recorded an interview with Glenn Thrush for Politico's "Off Message" podcast for later online broadcast.

January 24

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with former President Shimon Peres of Israel to wish him a speedy recovery following his recent heart attack.

January 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Bethesda, MD, where, at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, he visited with wounded U.S. servicemembers and their families. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

January 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, they met with Senate Minority Leader Harry M. Reid and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi to discuss legislative priorities in advance of the House Democratic Issues Conference later in the week.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in an interview with Jeffrey Goldberg of the Atlantic magazine. Then, in the Situation Room, he met with leaders of his health and national security teams, including Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Thomas R. Frieden, and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony S. Fauci, to discuss the spread of Zika and other mosquito-borne viruses in the Americas as well as steps being taken to protect the U.S. public and the potential economic and developmental impacts of the Zika virus spreading in the Western Hemisphere. The President emphasized the need to accelerate research efforts to make available better diagnostic tests, develop vaccines and therapeutics, and ensure that all U.S. citizens have information about the Zika virus and steps they can take to better protect themselves from infection.

January 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew. Then, also in the Oval Office, the President met with Sen. Bernard Sanders.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden

had lunch. Later, in the Diplomatic Reception Room, the President recorded separate "Live From the White House" television interviews on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act with Curt Autry of WWBT in Richmond, VA; Jim Rosenfield of WCAU in Philadelphia, PA; Joyce Garbaciak of WISN in Milwaukee, WI; Deanie Wimmer of KSL in Salt Lake City, UT; Jim Benemann of KCNC in Denver, CO; David Ono of KABC in Los Angeles, CA; and Allen Martin of KPIX in Oakland, CA, for later broadcast.

January 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Situation Room, the President met with the National Security Council to discuss the intensification of the U.S. campaign to degrade and destroy the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, as well as the integration of military and diplomatic efforts on all fronts, including working with international partners to counter ISIL's stated goal of expansion beyond Iraq and Syria.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a credentialing ceremony for newly appointed Ambassadors to the U.S. Later, he traveled to Baltimore, MD, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced the nomination of Terrence J. Campbell to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas.

The President announced the nomination of Jennifer Klemetsrud Puhl to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

January 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter. Later, he had a telephone conversation with President Dilma Vana Rousseff of Brazil to discuss shared concerns over the spread of the Zika virus in the Western Hemisphere, the importance of collaborative efforts to deepen knowledge, advance research, and accelerate work to develop better vaccines and other technologies to control the virus, and the crucial need to prioritize building national, regional, and global capacity to combat infectious disease threats more broadly.

The White House announced that the President will meet with Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul D. Ryan and Senate Majority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell on February 2 to discuss legislative priorities for the upcoming congressional session and areas of potential compromise.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Sergio Mattarella of Italy to the White House on February 8.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Springfield, IL, on February 10 to address the Illinois General Assembly.

The President announced his intention to nominate R. David Harden to be Assistant Administrator for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The President announced his intention to appoint Traci D. Blackmon, Rachel Held Evans, and Adam Hamilton as members of the President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

January 30

In the afternoon, at the home of Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., the President and White House Senior Adviser Valerie B. Jarrett attended the Alfalfa Club luncheon.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Baltimore, MD, on February 3.

February 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Mathews Burwell.

In the afternoon, in the Vice President's Ceremonial Office at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with administration officials and research experts

serving on the White House Cancer Moonshot Task Force.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the 2015 National Basketball Association Champion Golden State Warriors to the White House on February 4.

The President declared a major disaster in Idaho and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe winter storms from December 16 through 27, 2015.

February 2

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom to discuss the situation in Syria, including international humanitarian support for those displaced by the violence and efforts to alleviate the refugee inflows in Europe; note the ongoing initiative to resolve the political impasse in Libya; and review U.K. negotiations with European Union leaders to reform its membership status. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul D. Ryan and Senate Majority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell to discuss legislative priorities for the upcoming congressional session and areas of potential compromise. Vice President Joe Biden also attended.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Speaker Ryan.

The White House announced that the President will present the Medal of Honor to Senior Chief Petty Officer Edward C. Byers, Jr., USN, on February 29.

The President declared a major disaster in Washington and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm, straight-line winds, flooding, landslides, mudslides, and a tornado from December 1 through 14, 2015.

February 3

In the morning, the President traveled to Catonsville, MD, where, at the Islamic Society of Baltimore, he participated in a roundtable discussion with Muslim leaders from around the country.

In the afternoon, in the gymnasium of the Al-Rahmah School on the campus of the Islamic Society of Baltimore, the President visited with students who had gathered to listen to his earlier remarks. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

Later in the afternoon, in Rooms 210 and 212 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, the President dropped by a meeting of the White House Rural Council to thank the Council for its work and discuss efforts to target Federal resources to help rural communities confront the challenges of financial stress, mental health, and the opioid epidemic.

February 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon of Colombia. Vice President Biden, National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice, Deputy Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, and Colombia's Minister of Foreign Relations Maria Angela Holguin Cuellar and Minister of Interior Juan Fernando Cristo Bustos also attended.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Sen. Charles E. Grassley and Rep. Robert W. Goodlatte to discuss criminal justice reform legislation.

The President announced the nomination of Stephanie A. Finley to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana.

The President announced the nomination of Claude J. Kelly III to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

The President announced the nomination of Patrick A. Burke to be a U.S. Marshal for the District of Columbia.

February 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an

intelligence briefing. Then, the President had a telephone conversation with President Xi Jinping of China to coordinate diplomatic efforts in response to North Korea's January 6 nuclear test, reaffirm their commitment to the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, reiterate that North Korea's planned ballistic missile test would violate multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions, and emphasize the importance of a strong and united international response. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Sen. Robert P. Casey, Jr., to discuss legislative priorities for the upcoming congressional session.

In the afternoon, in the East Room, the President recorded a segment with Stephen T. Colbert for CBS's "Late Show With Stephen Colbert" for later broadcast.

The President declared a major disaster in Arkansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, and flooding from December 26, 2015, through January 22, 2016.

The President declared an emergency in Louisiana and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts due to the emergency conditions in the area affected by flooding from December 28, 2015, through February 1, 2016.

February 7

In the afternoon, in the Blue Room, the President and Mrs. Obama participated in a live pre–Super Bowl 50 interview with Gayle King of the "CBS This Morning" program. Then, in the Oval Office, he continued his interview with Ms. King for later broadcast.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Springfield, IL, on February 10.

February 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada to discuss Canada's role in the Global Coalition To Counter ISIL and Canada-U.S. relations. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with President Sergio Mattarella of Italy.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with President Park Geunhye of South Korea to discuss North Korea's recent ballistic missile launch, reiterate South Korea-U.S. solidarity, and emphasize the need for a strong and united international response. He also had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan to discuss North Korea's provocations, Japan-U.S. security cooperation, and the importance of forging a strong, united international response to North Korea's actions.

The White House announced that the President will travel to San Jose, CA, on February 11.

The White House announced that the President will welcome King Abdullah II of Jordan to the White House on February 24.

February 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Senate Minority Leader Harry M. Reid, Sen. Charles E. Schumer, and Rep. Steven J. Israel to discuss the President's 2017 Federal budget proposal and domestic and national security priorities over the coming months. Later, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Gary W. Kubiak and team captain and offensive linebacker DeMarcus Ware of the National Football League's Denver Broncos to congratulate them on their team's victory in Super Bowl 50.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Los Angeles, CA, on February 11.

The President declared a major disaster in Texas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe winter storms, tornadoes,

straight-line winds, and flooding from December 26, 2015, through January 21, 2016.

February 10

In the morning, the President traveled to Springfield, IL. Upon arrival, he traveled to the Feed Store restaurant, where he ordered lunch, greeted patrons and staff, and posed for photographs.

In the afternoon, at the Hoogland Center for the Arts, the President and former Illinois State Sens. Kirk W. Dillard, Dennis J. Jacobs, and Lawrence M. Walsh, Jr., participated in an interview with Christi Parsons of the Chicago Tribune and the Los Angeles Times for later broadcast online. Later, he traveled to San Jose, CA, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Sheraton San Jose Hotel in Milpitas, CA, where he remained overnight.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Palm Springs, CA, on February 12.

The President declared a major disaster in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe winter storms and flooding from December 26, 2015, through January 5, 2016.

February 11

In the morning, the President traveled to a private residence in Palo Alto, CA, where he attended a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee fundraiser.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Atherton, CA. Later, he traveled to Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank, CA, where he recorded an interview with Ellen DeGeneres of NBC's "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" for later broadcast. Later, he traveled to Los Angeles, CA.

In the evening, the President traveled to the W Los Angeles-West Beverly Hills hotel, where he remained overnight.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the 2015 Stanley Cup Champion Chicago Blackhawks to the White House on February 18.

The President announced his intention to nominate John B. King, Jr., to be Secretary of Education.

The President announced the nomination of Abdul K. Kallon to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.

February 12

In the morning, the President traveled to Palm Springs, CA. While en route aboard Air Force One, he took an aerial tour of the newly established Castle Mountains National Monument, Mojave Trails National Monument, and Sand to Snow National Monument in Southern California. Upon arrival in Palm Springs, he traveled to Rancho Mirage, CA, arriving in the afternoon.

In the evening, the President traveled to a private residence in the Thunderbird Heights neighborhood, where he remained overnight.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christine A. Elder to be Ambassador to Liberia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Elizabeth Holzhall Richard to be Ambassador to Lebanon.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ranvir Trehan to be a General Trustee on the Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

The President announced his intention to nominate Raymond Bogan to be a U.S. Commissioner to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sharon H. Yuan and Miriam Sapiro to be members of the Panel of Arbitrators of the International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes.

February 13

In the morning, the President traveled to Thunderbird Country Club in Rancho Mirage, CA. Then, he returned to a private residence in the Thunderbird Heights neighborhood. Later, he traveled to La Quinta, CA, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President returned to a private residence in the Thunderbird Heights neighborhood of Rancho Mirage. Also in the

afternoon, he was informed of the death of Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin G. Scalia.

Later in the afternoon, following his remarks at Omni Rancho Las Palmas Resort and Spa, the President returned to a private residence in Thunderbird Heights, where he remained overnight.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Eugene Scalia, son of Associate Justice Antonin Scalia, to extend his and Mrs. Obama's condolences to the entire Scalia family on the death of his father. Later, he had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia to discuss the February 11 meeting of the International Syria Support Group, the delivery of humanitarian aid to besieged areas of Syria, and the implementation of a nationwide cessation of hostilities. In particular, President Obama urged Russia to play a constructive role by ending its air campaign against moderate opposition forces in Syria. They also discussed the situation in Ukraine and the need for separatist forces to fulfill their Minsk agreement obligations, especially adhering to the ceasefire and ensuring full access for the special monitoring mission of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe in eastern Ukraine.

February 14

In the morning, the President traveled to Thunderbird Country Club in Rancho Mirage, CA. Then, he returned to a private residence in the Thunderbird Heights neighborhood of Rancho Mirage. Later, he traveled to the Porcupine Creek Golf Course.

In the evening, the President returned to a private residence in Thunderbird Heights, where he remained overnight.

February 15

In the morning, the President traveled to Thunderbird Country Club in Rancho Mirage, CA. Then, he returned to a private residence in the Thunderbird Heights neighborhood of Rancho Mirage. Later, he traveled to the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands.

In the afternoon, the President returned to a private residence in Thunderbird Heights. Later, he traveled to the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands, where, at the Sunnylands Center, he greeted leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

In the evening, the President returned to a private residence in Thunderbird Heights. Then, he traveled to the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands, where, at the Historic House, he hosted a working dinner for ASEAN leaders. Later, he returned to a private residence in Thunderbird Heights, where he remained overnight.

During the day, on the margins of the U.S.-ASEAN Leaders Summit at Sunnylands, the President met with Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung of Vietnam to discuss Vietnam-U.S. relations and note President Obama's acceptance of Vietnam's invitation to visit in May when he travels to Japan for the Group of Seven (G–7) nations summit.

February 16

In the morning, the President traveled to Thunderbird Country Club in Rancho Mirage, CA. Then, he returned to a private residence in the Thunderbird Heights neighborhood of Rancho Mirage. Later, he traveled to the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands, where, in the Historic House, he attended a second retreat session with leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Then, he participated in a family photograph with ASEAN leaders.

In the afternoon, the President recorded an interview with Lin Xueling of Channel NewsAsia for later broadcast. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

February 17

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry.

In the evening, at the BLT Steak restaurant, the President had dinner with actor Morgan Freeman and Obama Foundation advisers working on plans for siting a Presidential library in Chicago, IL.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Obama will attend a public

viewing of Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin G. Scalia who will lie in repose in the Great Hall at the U.S. Supreme Court on February 19.

The President announced his intention to appoint Thomas E. Donilon as Chair of the Commission on Enhancing National Cybersecurity.

The President announced his intention to appoint Samuel J. Palmisano as Vice Chair of the Commission on Enhancing National Cybersecurity.

The President declared a major disaster in Alaska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe storm from December 12 through 15, 2015.

The President declared a major disaster in Oregon and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe winter storms, straight-line winds, flooding, landslides, and mudslides from December 6 through 23, 2015.

February 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with members of the family of civil rights icon Martin Luther King, Jr., and showed them the bust newly displayed in the Oval Office in commemoration of Dr. King's legacy.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Senate Majority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell, Minority Leader Harry M. Reid, and Judiciary Committee Ranking Member Patrick J. Leahy to discuss his intention to nominate a Supreme Court Associate Justice.

Also during the day, in the Oval Office, the President and Mrs. Obama met with Virginia McClaurin, a 106-year-old Washington, DC, resident who was at the White House to attend the Black History Month reception in the East Room.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Obama will travel to Cuba on March 21 and 22 and Argentina on March 23 and 24.

February 19

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to discuss the situation in Syria and Turkish-U.S. counterterrorism cooperation, in particular the shared goal of degrading and ultimately destroying the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. The President condemned and offered condolences for the February 17 terrorist attack in Ankara, Turkey, and the February 18 terrorist attack against a Turkish military convoy in Diyarbakir Province, expressed concern about recent Syrian regime advances in northwest Syria, and called for a halt to actions that heighten tensions between Turkey and moderate opposition forces in northern Syria and undermine collective efforts to combat ISIL. Also in the morning, he had a telephone conversation with Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Charles E. Grassley to discuss his intention to nominate a Supreme Court Associate Justice.

In the afternoon, at the U.S. Supreme Court, the President and Mrs. Obama met with members of Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin G. Scalia's family to extend their condolences on behalf of the Nation for his death and express gratitude for his decades of public service. Then, in the Great Hall, he and Mrs. Obama attended a public viewing of Justice Scalia, who lay in repose until his funeral on February 20.

The President announced his intention to appoint David Benton as a member of the Arctic Research Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the National Advisory Council on Indian Education:

Phyliss J. Anderson;
Mandy Broaddus;
Dahkota Kicking Bear Brown; and
Joely Proudfit.

The President announced his intention to appoint Robert O. Carr and Keith T. Parker as members of the National Infrastructure Advisory Council.

February 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Also in the morning, he had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia to discuss the situation in Syria, in particular the international diplomatic efforts to establish a cease-fire between the Syrian regime and the armed opposition, and the situation in Ukraine, with President Obama stressing the importance of separatist forces in eastern Ukraine fulfilling their obligations under the Minsk agreements by honoring the cease-fire and permitting the special monitoring mission of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe full access to the conflict area. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Mayor Bobby J. Hopewell of Kalamazoo, MI, City Manager James Ritsema, Deputy City Manager Jeff Chamberlain, Kalamazoo County Sheriff Richard C. Fuller III, and Kalamazoo Public Safety Chief Jeffrey Hadley to offer his condolences for the injuries and loss of life in the February 20 shooting and offer any Federal support needed in pursuing their investigation.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, on the South Lawn, the President recorded an interview with actor Leonardo DiCaprio for a documentary film on climate change.

The White House released further details on the President's presentation of the Medal of Honor to Senior Chief Petty Officer Edward C. Byers, Jr., USN, on February 29.

February 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President participated in a video conference with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom, President François Hollande of France, and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to discuss the situation in Syria, including international diplomatic efforts to negotiate a cease-fire, and the ongoing refugee and migration crisis in Europe, in particular the importance of the NATO mission and coordination between Greece and Turkey to manage the flow of migrants into Europe. Later, in the Gallatin West Room of the Jefferson, Washington, DC hotel, he attended a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee roundtable fundraiser.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Jacksonville, FL, on February 26.

February 24

In the morning, the President published a guest post titled "A Responsibility I Take Seriously" on SCOTUSblog.com, a website focusing on the Supreme Court.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Veterans of Foreign Wars Commander-in-Chief John A. Biedrzycki and Executive Director Robert E. Wallace. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Sen. Orrin G. Hatch, President pro tempore of the Senate and former chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, to discuss his intention to nominate a Supreme Court Associate Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carla D. Hayden to be Librarian of Congress.

February 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Also in the morning, he met with Sen. A. Lamar Alexander, Jr.

In the afternoon, in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, the President recorded an interview with James Hamblin of the Atlantic magazine's "If Our Bodies Could Talk" video series for later broadcast online. Later, in the Holbrooke Conference Room at the Department of State, he met with the National Security Council.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Mat-

teo Renzi of Italy to discuss Italy-U.S. cooperation in the effort to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, strategies to manage the flow of migrants into Europe, and ways to improve the economic situation in Europe.

The White House announced that the President will meet on March 1 with Senate Majority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell, Minority Leader Harry M. Reid, and Judiciary Committee Chairman Charles E. Grassley and Ranking Member Patrick J. Leahy to discuss his intention to nominate a Supreme Court Associate Justice.

The President announced the nomination of Donald W. Beatty and Donald C. Coggins, Jr., to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina.

The President announced the nomination of Lucy Haeran Koh to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

February 26

In the morning, the President traveled to Jacksonville, FL, arriving in the afternoon. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Mayor David K. Kauffman of Hesston, KS, to discuss the shootings in Newton, KS, and Excel Industries in Hesston on February 25, offer his condolences for the loss of life, and extend his gratitude to police officers and other first responders who acted quickly to save lives.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Saft America, Inc., advanced batteries plant, where he toured manufacturing facilities with Saft America President Thomas J. Alcide, plant employee Jim Mastronardi, and Rep. Patrick E. Murphy. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced further details on the President's March 1 meeting with Senate Majority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell, Minority Leader Harry M. Reid, and Judiciary Committee Chairman Charles E. Grassley and Ranking Member Patrick J. Leahy to discuss his intention to nominate a Supreme Court Associate Justice.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the 2015 College Football Playoff National Champion University of Alabama Crimson Tide to the White House on March 2.

The White House announced further details on the state visit of Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada on March 10.

The President declared a major disaster in Georgia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding from December 22, 2015, through January 13, 2016.

February 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President participated in an interview with American Ballet Theatre principal dancer Misty Copeland and Maya Rhodan of Time magazine.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Milwaukee, WI, on March 3.

March 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, the President met with a delegation of scouts from Boy Scouts of America, who presented him with their annual report and discussed their youth development initiatives. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Senate Majority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell, Minority Leader Harry M. Reid, and Judiciary Committee Chairman Charles E. Grassley and Ranking Member Patrick J. Leahy to discuss the President's intention to nominate a Supreme Court Associate Justice.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch.

March 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a credentialing ceremony

for newly appointed Ambassadors to the U.S.: Pierre Clive Agius of Malta, Elisenda Vives Balmaña of Andorra, Armando Varricchio of Italy, and David B. MacNaughton of Canada. Later, he had a telephone conversation with NASA astronaut Cmdr. Scott J. Kelly to welcome him back to Earth from his record-breaking yearlong mission on the International Space Station, thank him for his service and for sharing his journey with people across the globe through social media, and note his participation in important research, which will help inspire a new generation of young people to pursue studies and careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and maintain U.S. leadership in space exploration.

March 3

In the morning, the President traveled to Milwaukee, WI.

In the afternoon, at the Engine Company 3 restaurant, the President had lunch with Mosinee, WI, resident Brent Brown, Springfield, IL, resident Karen George, and Milwaukee, WI, residents Karen and Sharon Szyszko and Susan W. Campbell, who had written to the President about their positive experiences with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christopher J. Brummer to be a Commissioner on the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Susan L. Castaneda to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Registered Agents and Brokers.

The President announced his intention to nominate Roberto R. Herencia to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Brian D. Quintenz to be a Commissioner on the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint J. Todd Breasseale as Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to appoint Abbey Johnston as a member of the Medal of Valor Review Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Jennifer Sheehy as a member of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

March 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Situation Room, the President participated in a video conference with President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah of Afghanistan to congratulate them on the National Unity Government's recent progress in naming candidates for Cabinet positions and High Peace Council leadership, note the Afghan Government's ongoing commitment to reform, accountability, regional cooperation, and Taliban reconciliation efforts, and commend Afghan security forces for their bravery and sacrifices in improving stability and security.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry. He also met with senior staff to discuss his intention to nominate a Supreme Court Associate Justice.

The President declared a major disaster in the District of Columbia and ordered Federal aid to supplement the District's recovery efforts in the area affected by a snowstorm on January 22 and 23.

The President declared a major disaster in Maryland and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm and snowstorm on January 22 and 23.

March 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President declared a major disaster in Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement commonwealth, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the areas affected by a severe winter storm and snowstorm on January 22 and 23.

March 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the East Room, the President met with student delegates from the 54th Annual U.S. Senate Youth Program and participated in a group photograph. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Austin, TX, on March 11.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Dallas, TX, on March 11 and 12.

March 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Map Room, the President recorded an interview with Juan Carlos López of CNN en Español for later broadcast. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Chief Judge Merrick B. Garland of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

March 10

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada. National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice, U.S. Ambassador to Canada Bruce Heyman, and Canada's Ambassador to the U.S. David B. MacNaughton, Minister of Foreign Affairs Stephane Dion, Minister of National Defense Harjit Singh Sajjan, and Minister of Environment and Climate Change Catherine McKenna also attended.

In the evening, on the North Portico, the President and Mrs. Obama, greeted Prime Minister Trudeau and his wife Sophie Grégoire-Trudeau, followed by an official photograph on the Grand Foyer Staircase.

March 11

In the morning, the President traveled to Austin, TX, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Torchy's Tacos restaurant, where, with Mayor Stephen I. Adler of Austin, TX, he purchased lunch and greeted staff. Later, he traveled to the Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Center for the Performing Arts, where, in the AT&T Room, he met with entrepreneurs, filmmakers, organizers, and technology industry leaders to discuss efforts to counter the recruitment and messaging of violent extremist groups through media.

In the evening, the President traveled to Dallas, TX. Upon arrival, he traveled to the Dallas Sheraton Hotel, where he remained overnight.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland to the White House on March 15.

March 12

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

March 13

The President declared a major disaster in Louisiana and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding beginning on March 8 and continuing.

March 14

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in a diplomatic reception room at the Department of State, following his remarks at the Global Chiefs of Mission Conference, the President met with Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian, who was released from detention in Iran in January, and his wife Yeganeh Salehi. National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice and Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition To Counter ISIL Brett H. McGurk also attended.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with lawmakers and stakeholders who supported the effort to designate three new national monuments in the California desert: Castle Mountains National Monument, Mojave Trails National Monument, and Sand to Snow National Monument.

Later in the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President participated in an interview with Lin-Manuel Miranda, creator of the Broadway musical "Hamilton." Then, in the

Rose Garden, he recorded a video in which he held cue cards while Mr. Miranda performed a free-style rap about his visit to the White House for later broadcast online. Later, he had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia to discuss the situation in Syria, including implementation of the cessation of hostilities between the Syrian regime and the armed opposition and President Putin's announcement of a partial withdrawal of Russian forces from Syria; the need for regime forces to allow access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance; and additional efforts to encourage a political transition in Syria. They also discussed the situation in Ukraine, with President Obama emphasizing the need for combined Russian-separatist forces to implement the cease-fire in eastern Ukraine and allow Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe monitors access to separatist-controlled areas, including the Russia-Ukraine border.

March 15

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President dropped by a meeting between Vice President Joe Biden, First Minister Arlene Foster and Deputy First Minister J. Martin P. McGuinness of Northern Ireland, and former Sen. Gary W. Hart, in his capacity as Secretary of State John F. Kerry's Personal Representative for Northern Ireland. He and Vice President Biden congratulated the First Minister on her election to office in January and commended both leaders' progress in the Northern Ireland peace process, specifically the successful conclusion of the Stormont House Agreement in December 2014 and the Fresh Start Agreement in November 2015. Later, in the Map Room, he recorded an interview with Andy Katz and Rebecca Lobo of ESPN for later broadcast.

The President announced the nomination of Rebecca Ross Haywood to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.

The President announced the nomination of Walter D. Counts III to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas.

The President announced the nomination of E. Scott Frost, James W. Hendrix and Irma Carrillo Ramirez to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas.

The President announced the nomination of Karen Gren Scholer to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas.

The President announced the nomination ofthe nomination of Kathleen M. Sweet to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of New York.

The President announced the nomination of Danny C. Reeves to be a judge on the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

The President declared a major disaster in New Jersey and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm and snowstorm from January 22 through 24.

March 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, in advance of his trip to Cuba, the President met with Cuban American leaders, including civil society advocates, faith leaders, and representatives from the private sector, to discuss the recent regulatory changes made by the Departments of Commerce and the Treasury and the impact those changes would have on the ability of U.S. citizens to travel to Cuba and engage directly with the Cuban people. He also reiterated his intention to meet with Cuban Government officials, entrepreneurs, and members of civil society while in Havana. Later, in the Diplomatic Reception Room, he listened to and visited with a women's choir from Spelman College, who were visiting the White House for a celebration of Women's History Month.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Saudi Arabia on April 21, that he will then travel to the United Kingdom, and that he will conclude his travel by visiting Germany, as previously announced.

The President declared a major disaster in Delaware and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the ar-

ea affected by the severe winter storm and flooding on January 22 and 23.

March 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, the President recorded an interview with Nina Totenberg of NPR for later broadcast.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anne Hall to be Ambassador to Lithuania.

The President announced his intention to nominate James X. Dempsey to be a member of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Douglas B. Wilson to be a member of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Almo J. Carter and Larry T. Glenn to be Commissioners of the U.S. Parole Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jeffrey A. Rosen to be a Governor on the Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service.

The President announced his intention to appoint Ilona R. Cohen and Geovette E. Washington as a members of the Council of the Administrative Conference of the United States.

The President announced the nomination of Lisabeth Tabor Hughes to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.

March 18

In the afternoon, the President recorded a telephone sketch with Cuban comedian Luis "Pánfilo" Silva, ahead of the President's travel to Cuba, for later broadcast. Later, in the Blue Room, he recorded a video message on the observance of Nowruz for later broadcast online.

During the day, the President was briefed by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco on the arrest in Brussels, Belgium, of Salah Abdeslam, the sole surviving suspected accomplice in the terrorist attacks in Paris, France, on November 13, 2015.

Also during the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Prime Minister Charles Yvon Michel of Belgium and President François Hollande of France to congratulate them on the arrest of Salah Abdeslam in Brussels, commend the work of Belgian security services and the close cooperation between Belgian and French law enforcement authorities, and reiterate U.S. support for Belgium and France in the fight against terrorism and joint efforts to degrade and destroy the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the leaders of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden to the White House for a U.S.-Nordic Leaders Summit on May 13.

March 19

The President declared a major disaster in Texas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding beginning on March 7 and continuing.

March 20

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, their daughters Malia and Sasha, and his mother-in-law Marian Robinson traveled to Havana, Cuba. Accompanying them aboard Air Force One were Rachel and Sharon Robinson, wife and daughter of the late Major League Baseball player Jackie Robinson. Upon arrival, they traveled to the Meliá Habana hotel.

In the evening, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to the Old Havana historical district, where they toured Plaza de Armas square, greeted locals, visited monuments, made stops at the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception and the Museum of the City of Havana, and had dinner at San Cristóbal restaurant. While at the Cathedral, he met with Cardinal Jaime Lucas Ortega y Alamino of Havana and recorded an interview with David Muir of ABC's "World News Tonight With David Muir" program for later broadcast. Later,

the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters traveled to the Chief of Mission's residence, where they remained overnight.

March 21

In the morning, the President traveled to the Revolution Square, where he participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the memorial of José Martí, toured the memorial, and signed the guest book. Later, he traveled to the Palace of the Revolution, where he participated in an arrival ceremony and photo opportunity with President Raúl Castro Ruz of Cuba.

In the afternoon, at the Palace of the Revolution, the President met with President Castro. Then, they had an expanded bilateral meeting that included several Cabinet officials and senior advisers from both countries. Then, he traveled to La Cervecería restaurant, where he recorded a second interview with David Muir of ABC's "World News Tonight With David Muir" program for later broadcast. Then, also at La Cervecería, he recorded a sketch with Cuban comedians Luis "Pánfilo" Silva, Mario "Chequera" Sardiñas, and Andy "Fecundo" Vásquez. Later, he returned to the Chief of Mission's residence.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Palace of the Revolution, where they attended a state dinner with President Raúl Castro Ruz of Cuba. Later, they returned to the Chief of Mission's residence, where they remained overnight.

March 22

In the morning, the President was briefed on the explosions in Brussels, Belgium. He also had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Charles Yvon Michel of Belgium to offer his condolences on the terrorist attacks in Brussels and reaffirm U.S. support, assistance, and commitment to defeating terrorism. Later, he traveled to the Gran Teatro de la Habana Alicia Alonso. Later, he traveled to the U.S. Embassy, where, in the Eagle Snack Bar, he met with Cuban dissidents and civil society leaders.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Estadio Latinoamericano, where he attended an exhibition game between Major League Baseball's Tampa Bay Rays and the Cuban National Team with President Raúl Castro Ruz of Cuba, joined by Mrs. Obama, Malia and Sasha Obama, and Mrs. Obama's mother Marian Robinson. While at the stadium, he also visited with Rachel and Sharon Robinson, wife and daughter of the late Major League Baseball player Jackie Robinson, and former New York Yankees shortstop Derek S. Jeter and participated in a live interview with Karl Ravech, Eduardo Pérez, and Doug Glanville of ESPN. Before the game began, he greeted members of the Tampa Bay Rays.

Later in the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, their daughters Malia and Sasha, and his mother-in-law Marian Robinson traveled to Buenos Aires, Argentina, arriving the following morning.

March 23

Upon arrival in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the President, Mrs. Obama, their daughters Malia and Sasha, and his mother-in-law Marian Robinson traveled to the Chief of Mission's residence. Later, he traveled to the Casa Rosada, where, in the Salon Blanca, he was greeted by President Mauricio Macri of Argentina, followed by an expanded bilateral meeting. U.S. National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, and Ambassador to Argentina Noah B. Mamet and other advisers from both countries also attended.

In the afternoon, in the President's Office at the Casa Rosada, the President had a restricted bilateral meeting with President Macri. Later, he traveled to the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Cathedral, where he visited with Cardinal Mario Aurielio Poli of Buenos Aires, Minister of Foreign Relations, International Trade, and Culture Susana Malcorra of Argentina, Apostolic Nuncio to Argentina Archbishop Emil Paul Tscherrig, and other clergy; participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the tomb of José de San Martín; and viewed a memorial to the Holocaust. Later, he traveled to the Sheraton Buenos Aires Hotel and Convention Center, where he visited with U.S. Embassy personnel and their families.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Usina del Arte. Then, he returned to the Chief of Mission's residence.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Néstor Kirchner Cultural Centre, where they were greeted by President Mauricio Macri of Argentina and his wife Juliana Awada. Later, they returned to the Chief of Mission's residence, where they remained overnight.

The President declared a major disaster in Pennsylvania and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm and snowstorm on January 22 and 23.

March 24

In the morning, the President traveled to the Parque de la Memoria, a memorial dedicated to the victims of the 1976–1983 military regime, where he viewed monuments with President Mauricio Macri of Argentina. Later, he returned to the Chief of Mission's residence.

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, their daughters Malia and Sasha, and his mother-in-law Marian Robinson traveled to San Carlos de Bariloche, Argentina, where, at the Parque Llao Llao, they hiked along the Villa Tacul Trail. Then, also at the Parque Llao Llao, he, Mrs. Obama, and Malia toured Nahuel Huapi Lake aboard the *Modesta Victoria* with guide Manuel Echeverria.

In the evening, at the Llao Llao Hotel and Resort, the President, Mrs. Obama, their daughters Malia and Sasha, and Mrs. Robinson had dinner. While at the Llao Llao Hotel and Resort, he and Mrs. Obama met with President Mauricio Macri of Argentina and his wife Juliana Awada. Later, they returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following morning.

During the day, the President received a telephone briefing from Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco on the ongoing investigation of the terrorist attacks in Brussels, Belgium.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Xi Jinping of China to the White House on March 31.

March 25

The White House announced that the annual Easter Egg Roll will take place on March 28.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Atlanta, GA, on March 29.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to the White House on April 4.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of Faustin Archange Touadéra as President of the Central African Republic in Bangui, Central African Republic, on March 30:

Samantha Power (head of delegation);
Jeffrey Hawkins;
Karen Bass;
Isobel Coleman;
Raymond E. Mabus, Jr.;
Linda Etim;
David M. Rodriguez; and
D. Bruce Wharton.

The President announced his intention to appoint Dori Henry as Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to appoint Robin L. Diamonte as a member of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

The President declared a major disaster in Mississippi and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding beginning on March 9 and continuing.

March 27

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Alexandria, VA, where they attended an Easter Sunday service at the Alfred Street Baptist Church. Later, they returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, the President had separate telephone conversations with the parents of

Justin and Stephanie Shults, U.S. citizens who were killed in the terrorist attacks in Brussels, Belgium, on March 22, to offer his condolences for their deaths.

March 28

In the morning, on the South Lawn, the President and Mrs. Obama participated in the annual White House Easter Egg Roll. Later, also on the South Lawn, he read "Where the Wild Things Are" to children participating in the Easter Egg Roll. Then, on the White House Basketball Court, he visited briefly with former National Basketball Association player Shaquille R. O'Neal, who was at the White House for a Junior NBA event. Also in the morning, in the Blue Room, he and Mrs. Obama met with Kameria Chayten, a first grader from Birmingham, AL, who had written a letter to the President asking for the chance to meet him with her family before the end of his term.

In the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President met with members of his counterterrorism and homeland security team to discuss efforts to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization following the March 22 terrorist attacks in Brussels, Belgium. The President was briefed on the absence of specific, credible intelligence of any plot to conduct similar attacks in the U.S., expanded information sharing with international partners, and ongoing efforts to disrupt external plots emanating from ISIL-controlled territory and address ISIL's use of the Internet to recruit followers and encourage attacks in the U.S.

The White House announced that the President will meet with President Park Geun-hye of South Korea and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan on the margins of the Nuclear Security Summit on March 31.

March 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Atlanta, GA, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

March 30

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan to offer his condolences for the March 27 terrorist attack in Lahore, express his understanding of Prime Minister Sharif's decision to cancel his visit to the U.S. in the wake of the attack, and reiterate his commitment to Pakistan-U.S. counterterrorism cooperation. Then, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with Ramona Brant, Norman O. Brown, and Angie Jenkins, who received commutations from President Obama; Phillip A. Emmert and Michael D. Short, who received commutations from former President George W. Bush; and Serena D. Nunn and Kemba N. Smith, who received commutations from former President William J. Clinton.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry.

March 31

In the evening, in the East Room, the President hosted a working dinner with heads of delegations attending the Nuclear Security Summit. Vice President Joe Biden also attended. On the margins of the dinner, he met with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to discuss Turkey-U.S. cooperation on regional security, counterterrorism, and migration and extend condolences on behalf of the American people for those killed and injured in the terrorist attack in Diyarbakir, Turkey, earlier in the day.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of Mahamadou Issoufou as President of Niger in Niamey, Niger, on April 2:

David M. Rodriguez (head of delegation);
Eunice S. Reddick;
Bisa Williams; and
Kyeh Kim.

April 1

In the afternoon, in Halls D and E of the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, the President participated in a family photograph followed by a working lunch with leaders attending the Nuclear Security Summit.

April 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the East Room, he hosted a reception for Greek Independence Day. Vice President Biden also attended.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of Patrice Talon as President of Benin in Porto-Novo, Benin, on April 6: D. Bruce Wharton (head of delegation); Lucy Tamlyn; and Kyeh Kim.

April 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter.

In the evening, in the Map Room, the President and Mrs. Obama recorded a promotional video with competitors in the Invictus Games for later broadcast. Later, in the Blue Room, he hosted a dinner for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, combatant commanders, and their spouses. Vice President Joe Biden and Mrs. Obama also attended.

The President announced the nomination of David C. Nye to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Idaho.

April 6

In the morning, the President had separate telephone conversations with President Htin Kyaw and Member of Parliament and National League for Democracy Leader Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma to offer his congratulations on the recent Presidential Inauguration and historic democratic transfer of power to a civilian-led Government that reflects the will of the people and underscore the commitment of the U.S. in supporting the people and Government of Burma as they work to achieve a more inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous future. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Jerold T. "Jay" Wright of the Villanova University men's basketball team to congratulate him on his team's victory in the NCAA Men's College Basketball National Championship.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Chicago, IL, on April 7.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Los Angeles, CA, on April 7 and 8.

The White House announced that the President will travel to San Francisco, CA, on April 8.

April 7

In the afternoon, the President and his daughter Malia traveled to Chicago, IL. Upon arrival, he traveled to the University of Chicago Law School, where he dropped by the D'Angelo Law Library reading room and briefly addressed students who had gathered to watch a live video feed of his formal remarks in Harold J. Green Law Lounge. Later, following his remarks, the President recorded an interview with Chris Wallace of Fox News's "Fox News Sunday" program for later broadcast.

Later in the afternoon, the President and his daughter Malia traveled to Los Angeles, CA, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, the President and his daughter Malia traveled to Santa Monica, CA. Later, they traveled to the W Los Angeles-West Beverly Hills hotel in Los Angeles, where they remained overnight.

The White House announced that the President will host his administration's sixth and final White House Science Fair on April 13.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dimitri F. Kusnezov to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs at the National Nuclear Security Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Matthew Lehrich to be Assistant Secretary for Communications and Outreach at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Amy McIntosh to be Assistant Secretary for Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Antonia Whalen to be Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education at the Department of Education.

April 8

In the morning, the President and his daughter Malia traveled to a private residence, where he attended a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee roundtable fundraiser.

In the afternoon, the President and his daughter Malia traveled to San Francisco, CA. Upon arrival at San Francisco International Airport, he visited with supporters. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Rep. K.L. Jacqueline Speier also attended. Then, they traveled to the InterContinental San Francisco hotel. Later, he traveled to a private residence, where he participated in a Democratic National Committee roundtable fundraiser.

In the evening, the President returned to the InterContinental San Francisco, where he remained overnight.

The White House announced that the President will meet with the National Security Council at Central Intelligence Agency headquarters in Fairfax, VA, on April 13.

The President announced his intention to appoint Stephen W. Preston and Wendy R. Sherman as members of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Nancy E. Brune and Beatriz Rendón as members of the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

April 9

In the afternoon, the President and his daughter Malia returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

April 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Federal Reserve Chair Janet L. Yellen to discuss the national economy and implementation of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. Vice President Biden also attended.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Geno Auriemma of the University of Connecticut women's basketball team to congratulate him on his team's victory in the NCAA championship game.

April 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, he viewed exhibits on display at the newly established Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument.

April 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Then, on the State Floor, he viewed projects on exhibit for the White House Science Fair and visited with student participants. Later, he traveled to Langley, VA.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Commission on Enhancing National Cybersecurity:

Keith B. Alexander;
Annie I. Antón;
Ajaypal S. Banga;
Steven R. Chabinsky;
Patrick D. Gallagher;
Peter Lee;
Herbert S. Lin;
Heather H. Murren;
Joe Sullivan; and
Maggie Wilderotter.

April 14

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President dropped by a meeting between Vice President Biden and Prime Minister Edi Rama of Albania to discuss Albania-U.S. relations, regional security, counterterrorism efforts, and Albania's efforts to advance European integration. Later, also in the Roosevelt Room, he recorded an interview with Nicole Sinclair of Yahoo! Finance for online broadcast on April 15.

The President announced his intention to nominate Susan F. Beard to be Inspector General of the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Susan S. Gibson to be Inspector General of the National Reconnaissance Office.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mary Beth Leonard to be U.S. Representative to the African Union, with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lawrence R. Silverman to be Ambassador to Kuwait.

The President announced his intention to appoint Rosemary Freitas Williams as Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to appoint Jordan Goodman and Howard Konar as members of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

The President announced the nomination of the following individuals to serve as judges on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington: Beth M. Andrus; J. Michael Diaz; and Kathleen M. O'Sullivan.

April 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Diplomatic Reception Room, the President met with various hip-hop and R&B artists to discuss criminal justice reform and the White House "My Brother's Keeper" initiative. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with J Street Chairman of the Board Morton H. Halperin and Chief of Staff Daniel Kalik, J Street U Director Sarah Turbow, and J Street U national board and staff members.

April 18

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia to discuss the status of the cessation of hostilities between the Syrian regime and the armed opposition, stress the importance of pressing the Syrian regime to halt its offensive attacks against the opposition, and underscore the commitment to ensuring humanitarian access to all besieged areas. They also discussed the situation in Ukraine, with President Obama urging President Putin to take steps to end the fighting in eastern Ukraine and stressing the importance of moving forward with full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President visited with the 2016 winners of the White House News Photographers Association's Eyes on History contest, including 2016 Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Rodney Batten of NBC News. Later, in the Blue Room, the President recorded an interview with Charlie Rose of the "CBS This Morning" program for later broadcast in installments on various CBS programs and in full on PBS's "The Week" program.

During the day, the President received a briefing from his senior staff on the status of arguments made by U.S. Solicitor General Donald B. Verrilli, Jr., in the Supreme Court case *United States* v. *Texas* concerning the administration's efforts to shield undocumented immigrants from deportation and allow them to work legally.

The White House announced additional details concerning the President and Mrs. Obama's travel to the United Kingdom on April 22.

April 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Ramstein Air Base, Germany, arriving the following morning.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Rafael Correa Delgado of Ecuador to convey his condolences on behalf of the American people for the loss of life caused by the April 16 earthquake and discuss U.S. assistance in support of Ecuador's recovery effort.

The President announced his intention to nominate Geeta Pasi to be Ambassador to Chad.

The President announced his intention to nominate David V. Brewer and Gayle A. Nachtigal to be members of the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the National Infrastructure Advisory Council:

Jan Allman;
Georges C. Benjamin;
Jesse F. "Jeff" Bingaman, Jr.; and
Ben Fowke.

The President announced his intention to appoint Chris Young as a member of the President's National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee.

The President announced his intention to appoint Gary Gilbert and David A. Score as members of the Board of Visitors to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy.

The President made additional disaster assistance available by authorizing an increase in the level of Federal funding for Public Assistance projects undertaken by the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and Iowa as a result of flooding from May 24 through August 1, 2011.

The President made additional disaster assistance available by authorizing an increase in the level of Federal funding for Public Assistance projects undertaken by the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and Iowa as a result of flooding from May 25 through August 1, 2011.

April 20

In the morning, the President traveled to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Erga Palace, where he met with King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia to discuss Saudi Arabia-U.S. relations, thank Saudi Arabia for hosting the April 21 U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit, underscore the importance of accelerating the campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, and review developments in various regional conflicts, including Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The meeting was also attended by U.S. National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice, Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency John O. Brennan, Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Joseph W. Westphal, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco, and other senior advisers; and Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister Muhammad Bin Nayif bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, Minister of Defense Muhammad bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs Adil al-Ahmad al-Jubayr, and other senior officials of Saudi Arabia.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to the Ritz-Carlton, Riyadh, hotel.

In the evening, in Suite 808 at the Ritz-Carleton hotel, the President met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the United Arab Emirates Armed Forces, to discuss the April 21 U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit as an opportunity for the U.S. and its Gulf partners to strengthen cooperation against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization and in other regional conflicts, including Yemen and Libya; review challenges posed by Iran's destabilizing activities in the region; and reiterate the importance of stabilizing areas of Iraq liberated from ISIL. Later, in Meeting Rooms A and B of the Ritz-Carleton, he visited with U.S. Embassy personnel and their families. He remained overnight at the Ritz-Carleton.

The White House announced additional details concerning the President's travel to Hannover, Germany, on April 25.

April 21

In the morning, the President traveled to Diriyah Palace, where, in the First Floor Foyer, he participated in a family photograph with Gulf Cooperation Council leaders. Then, in the Conference Hall, he attended the first session of the U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit. U.S. National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice, Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter, Secretary of State John F. Kerry, and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes also attended.

Also in the morning, upon arrival at the Diriyah Palace, the President met with Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait to discuss Kuwait-U.S. cooperation in the region, the importance of Gulf support in stabilizing areas of Iraq liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, challenges posed by Iran's destabilizing activities in the region, and Kuwait's role as a leader in delivering humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees. He also met with Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar to discuss the role of Qatar and the Gulf Cooperation Council in addressing conflicts in Syria, Yemen, and Libya, including diplomatic efforts to advance a political resolution in all three countries, and Qatar's counterterrorism efforts, primarily in disabling terrorist finance channels.

In the afternoon, in Dining Hall 2 at the Diriyah Palace, the President attended the second session of the U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit, as well as a working lunch. Then, in Conference Hall 1, he attended the third session of the summit. Later, he traveled to London, United Kingdom, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, upon arrival in London, the President traveled to Winfield House, the residence of the U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom, where he remained overnight.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peggy E. Gustafson to be Inspector General of the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Annette Evans Smith to be a member of the National Council on the Arts.

April 22

In the morning, at the Grosvenor House hotel, the President visited with U.S. Embassy personnel and their families. Then, he returned to Winfield House.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Windsor, United Kingdom, where, in the Private Dining Room at Windsor Castle, they had lunch with Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. Later, they returned to Winfield House in London. Then, he traveled to 10 Downing Street, where he met with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. Later, he returned to Winfield House.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Kensington Palace, where they had dinner with Prince William and Catherine, Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, and Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex. Later, they returned to Winfield House, where they remained overnight.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the U.S. Naval Academy football team to the White House to present them with the 2015 Commander in Chief's Trophy on April 27.

April 23

In the morning, the President traveled to the Globe Theatre, where he toured the facility with Director of Education Patrick Spottiswoode and viewed a brief musical and dramatic performance, including excerpts from "Hamlet," in commemoration of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. Later, he traveled to the Royal Horticultural Halls.

In the afternoon, in the Library Reading Room at the Royal Horticultural Halls, the President recorded an interview with Huw Edwards of BBC News for later broadcast. Then, in Lindley Hall, he met with Labour Party Leader Jeremy B. Corbyn of the United Kingdom to congratulate him on his election as Leader and discuss economic inequality, the

impact of globalization on workers, and continuation of the United Kingdom's membership in the European Union. Later, he traveled to Watford, United Kingdom, where, at the Grove golf course, he played a round of golf with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom, White House Trip Director Marvin D. Nicholson, Jr., and Special Assistant to the President and Principal Travel Aide Joseph B. Paulsen.

In the evening, the President returned to Winfield House in London, where he remained overnight.

April 24

In the morning, the President traveled to Hannover, Germany, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Seefugium hotel. Later, he traveled to the Schloss Herrenhausen, where he participated in an official arrival ceremony in the Courtyard of Honor and Gardens, followed by meetings with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany in the Rooftop Pavilion Room. Later, he traveled to the Hannover Congress Centrum, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Schloss Herrenhausen, where, in the Ballroom, he attended a dinner with Chancellor Merkel and German and U.S. business leaders. Later, he returned to the Seefugium hotel, where he remained overnight.

April 25

In the morning, the President traveled to the Hannover Messe Fairgrounds, where he toured the Hannover Messe Trade Fair with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Schloss Herrenhausen, where, in Gallery Hall, he recorded an interview with Charlie Rose of PBS's "Charlie Rose" program for later broadcast. Then, in the Ballroom, he met with Chancellor Merkel, President François Hollande of France, Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of Italy, and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom to discuss efforts to address the ongoing refugee and migration crisis in Europe, the situations in Syria, Libya, and Ukraine, coalition efforts to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, and the importance of concluding the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The White House announced that the President will honor the 2016 National and State Teachers of the Year on May 3.

The President declared a major disaster in Texas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding from April 17 through 24.

April 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Oval Office and the Vice President's Office in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, he recorded a video with Vice President Biden and White House staffers for the President's remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner on April 30.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Flint, MI, on May 4.

The President declared a disaster under the Compact of Free Association between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Marshall Islands, as amended, due to ongoing severe drought.

April 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Situation Room, East Colonnade, and State Floor, the President recorded an interview with Peter Bergen of CNN for later broadcast.

In the evening, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a Seder to mark the beginning of Passover.

The President announced his intention to nominate Angela L. Kokosko Ripley to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Registered Agents and Brokers.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gail H. Marcus to be a member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kathleen M. Marshall to be a member of the Election Assistance Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Leslie Greene Bowman and George J. Sanchez to be members of the National Council on the Humanities.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kent Y. Hirozawa to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Emanuel Chirico as a member of the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations.

The President announced the nomination of Patricia D. Barksdale and William F. Jung to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida.

The President announced the nomination of Todd E. Edelman and Florence Y. Pan to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

The President announced the nomination of Philip R. Lammens to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida.

The President announced the nomination of Regina M. Rodriguez to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado.

The President announced the nomination of Patricia A. Timmons-Goodson to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

The President announced the nomination of Anne R. Traum to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada.

April 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Family Theater, he recorded a video with former Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner and White House staffers for use in the President's remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association (WHCA) dinner on April 30. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, he recorded a video message on the occasion of Major League Baseball Hall of Famer and Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Willie H. Mays, Jr.'s 85th birthday. Later, in the Oval Office, he recorded an additional video segment with Mrs. Obama for his WHCA dinner remarks.

In the afternoon, in the East Room, the President met with departing White House interns and participated in a question-and-answer session. Later, in the Private Dining Room, he participated in an interview with Philip Galanes of the New York Times and actor Brian Cranston for later publication as part of the newspaper's "Table for Three" series.

The White House announced further details on the President's travel to Flint, MI, on May 4.

May 1

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama met with Obama Foundation advisers to review architecture and design proposals for the Obama Presidential Library in Chicago, IL.

May 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Diplomatic Reception Room, the President recorded separate "Live From the White House" interviews with local television anchors: Steve Karlin of KCCI in Des Moines, IA; Josh McElveen of WMUR in Manchester, NH; Cammy Dierking of WKRC in Cincinnati, OH; Kathy Mykleby of WISN in Milwaukee, WI; Kari Lake of KSAZ in Phoenix, AZ; and Phil Witt of WDAF in Kansas City, MO.

The White House announced further details on the President's travel to Flint, MI, on May 4.

May 3

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry. Then, in the Blue Room, the President met with National Teacher

of the Year award recipient Jahana Hayes and one of her students, Lynadia Whiting.

During the day, the President was briefed on the death of U.S. Navy Seal Charles H. Keating IV in Teleskof, Iraq.

May 4

In the morning, the President traveled to Flint, MI.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Northwestern High School, where, in the library, he participated in a roundtable discussion with Flint residents and community leaders: Carol Weber, Jaslyn Morris, Harold Harrington, Nicholas Custer, Mona Hanna-Attisha, Rigel J. Dawson, Tyrone Wooten, Nicole Spears, and Rick Vasquez. Then, also at Northwestern High School, he visited with 8-year-old Amariyanna Copeny, also known as "Little Miss Flint," who had written him a letter about her concerns regarding the contaminated tap water in Flint, MI.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The White House announced that the President will deliver the commencement address at Howard University on May 7.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Ottawa, Canada, on June 29.

May 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, the President had a telephone conversation with President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico to congratulate him on the "everyday justice" reform package submitted to Mexico's Congress, review joint efforts to address irregular migration from Central America, and pledge Mexico-U.S. collaboration to reduce the production and consumption of heroin. Later, in the East Room, he visited with recipients of the 2013 Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers and participated in a photo opportunity.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Then, in the Diplomatic Reception Room, they met with 6-year-old immigration reform activist Sophie Cruz, who was at the White House for the Cinco de Mayo reception. Later, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Joint Base Andrews, MD.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the NCAA Champion University of Connecticut women's basketball team to the White House on May 10.

The White House announced that the President will host President Sauli Niinistö of Finland, Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven of Sweden, Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen of Denmark, and Prime Minister Sigurdur Ingi Jóhannsson of Iceland at the White House for a U.S.-Nordic Leaders Summit on May 13.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the opening ceremony of the 2016 Invictus Games in Orlando, FL, on May 8:

Michelle Obama (head of delegation);
Precious Goodson;
Elizabeth H. Dole;
Centra "Ce-Ce" Mazyck;
Bill Rausch;
Dylan Têtе; and
Barbara Van Dahlen.

The President announced his intention to appoint Henry C. Eickelberg as a member of the Advisory Committee to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Sachin Dev Pavithran and Shelley Siegel as members of the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Wayne A.I. Frederick and Janice Bryant Howroyd as members of the President's Board of Advisers on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

May 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President reviewed edits to his Howard University commencement address planned for May 7. Later, he met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter.

The President declared a major disaster in Arkansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, and flooding from March 8 through 13.

May 7

In the morning, the President traveled to Howard University, accompanied by Ta-Nehisi P. Coates, national correspondent for the Atlantic magazine.

May 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the East Room, he and Vice President Biden, joined by Sen. Orrin G. Hatch, met with members of the 1983 NCAA Champion North Carolina State University men's basketball team. Then, he participated in a photo opportunity and was presented with a team jersey.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a telephone interview with Dan Corey, Editor in Chief of the Rutgers University Daily Targum, for later publication and online broadcast.

May 10

In the morning, in the Situation Room, the President met with the National Security Council to discuss efforts to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Vietnam and Japan from May 21 through 28.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the closing ceremony of the 2016 Invictus Games in Orlando, FL, on May 12, joined by Vice President Joe Biden:

Jill T. Biden (head of delegation);
Betty Easley;
Noah Galloway;
William McNulty; and
Brad Snyder.

The President announced his intention to nominate Blair Anderson to be Under Secretary for Policy at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carol Z. Perez to be Ambassador to Chile.

The President announced his intention to nominate J. Patricia Wilson Smoot to be a Commissioner on the U.S. Parole Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert M. Tobias to be a member of the Internal Revenue Service Oversight Board.

May 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew. Later, also in the Oval Office, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Malcolm B. Turnbull of Australia to discuss maritime issues, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Paris Agreement on climate change, the international steel market, and efforts to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

The White House announced that the President will travel to New Brunswick, NJ, on May 15.

May 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christopher E. O'Connor to be Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to appoint Tamara L. Lundgren and Inge G. Thulin as members of the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the President's Advisory Council on Faith-

Based and Neighborhood Partnerships: Naseem Kourosh; Barbara Satin; and Manjit Singh.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities:

Jack Martin Brandt;
Dan Habib;
Michelle C. Reynolds; and
Ricardo Thornton, Sr.

The President announced his intention to appoint Thomas J. Reese and John Ruskay as members of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

May 13

In the evening, on the North Portico, the President and Mrs. Obama greeted in succession Prime Minister Sigurdur Ingi Jóhannsson of Iceland and his wife Ingibjörg Elsa Ingjaldsdóttir, Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen of Denmark and his wife Solrun Jákupsdóttir Løkke Rasmussen, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven of Sweden and his wife Ulla Löfven, Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway and her husband Sindre Finnes, and President Sauli Niinistö of Finland and his wife Jenni Haukio upon their arrival for a State Dinner. Then, in the State Dining Room, he and Mrs. Obama participated in an official photograph with Prime Minister Jóhannsson, Prime Minister Rasmussen, Prime Minister Löfven, Prime Minister Solberg, President Niinistö, and their spouses.

The White House announced that the President will award the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor to thirteen public safety officers on May 16.

May 15

In the morning, the President traveled to Piscataway, NJ. Upon arrival, he traveled to High Point Solutions Stadium in Piscataway, where he recorded an interview with Shane Smith, cofounder of VICE News, for later broadcast.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

May 16

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President recorded an interview with Legal Editor Chris Geidner of BuzzFeed News for later broadcast online. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter.

The White House announced that the President will award the National Medal of Science and National Medal of Technology and Innovation to 17 scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and innovators on May 19.

May 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, the President had a telephone conversation with President-elect Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines to convey his congratulations on Mr. Duterte's recent electoral victory, note the successful election and record voter participation, and discuss Philippines-U.S. relations.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Jack Ma, executive chairman and founder, Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Boys and Girls Clubs of America's Youth of the Year award recipients. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, he recorded an interview with Masayoshi Tanaka of Japan's NHK News for later broadcast.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, on May 23 and 24:

Gayle E. Smith (head of delegation);
John R. Bass;
Sarah Sewall; and
Anne C. Richard.

May 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to discuss the situation in Syria and Turkey-U.S. cooperation in the fight against terrorism. President Obama condemned and offered condolences for the February 17 terrorist attack in Ankara, which killed and wounded both military personnel and civilians, and the February 18 terrorist attack against a Turkish military convoy in Diyarbakir Province and pledged U.S. support in confronting terrorist organizations, including the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

Then, in the Gallatin West Room of the Jefferson, Washington, DC hotel, he attended a Democratic National Committee roundtable fundraiser.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ysaÿe M. Barnwell to be a member of the National Council on the Arts.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel J. Becker to be a member of the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rena Bitter to be Ambassador to Laos.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anne S. Casper to be Ambassador to Burundi.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sung Y. Kim to be Ambassador to the Philippines.

The President announced his intention to nominate Geoffrey R. Pyatt to be Ambassador to Greece.

The President announced his intention to nominate Douglas A. Silliman to be Ambassador to Iraq.

The President announced his intention to nominate Marie L. Yovanovitch to be Ambassador to Ukraine.

The President announced the nomination of Frances M. Tydingco-Gatewood to remain a judge on the U.S. District Court of Guam.

The President announced the nomination of Carole Schwartz Rendon to be a U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Ohio.

May 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch.

During the day, the President received regular briefings from Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco on the crash of EgyptAir Flight 804 off the coast of Greece.

May 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing, which included an update on the crash of EgyptAir Flight 804 off the coast of Greece.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Joint Base Andrews, MD. While playing a round of golf at the base, he was notified of the shooting outside the White House at the U.S. Secret Service security checkpoint on West Executive Drive.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India to the White House on June 7.

The President announced his intention to appoint Katharine G. Abraham as a member and Chairperson of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking.

The President announced his intention to appoint Rand Beers and Diana Bolt Perreiah as members of the National Infrastructure Advisory Council.

The President announced his intention to appoint W. Carl Lineberger and Anneila I. Sargent as members of the National Science Board.

May 21

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, AK. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi of Iraq to reaffirm U.S. support for the Iraqi people in the common fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, including the train-and-assist

mission to strengthen Iraqi security forces, and offer condolences on behalf of the American people for the recent terrorist attacks in Baghdad. In the evening, the President traveled to Yokota Air Force Base, Japan, arriving the following evening.

May 22

In the evening, upon arrival at Yokota Air Force Base, Japan, the President traveled to Hanoi, Vietnam. Upon arrival, he traveled to the JW Marriott Hotel Hanoi, where he remained overnight.

May 23

In the morning, the President traveled to the Presidential Palace, where he participated in an arrival ceremony with President Tran Dai Quang of Vietnam, followed by an official photograph. Then, in the Yellow Room, he met with President Quang. During the meeting, he and President Quang signed several Vietnam-U.S. commercial agreements. Then, at Ho Chi Minh's House on Stilts, on the grounds of the Presidential Palace, he met with National Assembly Chairwoman Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan of Vietnam and toured the house and grounds.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the International Convention Center. Later, he traveled to the Presidential Palace, where, in the Main Meeting Hall, he met with Prime Minister Nguyen Xuân Phúc of Vietnam. Then, he traveled to the Communist Party Central Office, where he met with Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phú Trong of Vietnam. Later, he returned to the JW Marriott Hotel Hanoi.

In the evening, the President traveled to Bun cha Huong Lien restaurant in Hanoi, where he dined and recorded an interview with Anthony Bourdain of CNN's "Anthony Bourdain Parts Unknown" program for later broadcast. Later, he returned to the JW Marriott Hotel Hanoi, where he remained overnight.

May 24

In the morning, in Salons A, B, and C of the JW Marriott Hotel Hanoi, the President met with U.S. Embassy personnel and their families. Later, he traveled to the National Convention Center.

In the afternoon, in the Me Tri neighborhood of Hanoi, the President recorded the second part of his interview with Anthony Bourdain of CNN's "Anthony Bourdain Parts Unknown" program for later broadcast. Then, he traveled to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, where, upon arrival, he toured the Jade Emperor Pagoda. Later, he traveled to the Dreamplex Coworking Space, where he toured the facility and visited with Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative exhibitors.

In the evening, the President traveled to the InterContinental Asiana Saigon hotel, where he remained overnight.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the NCAA Champion Villanova University men's basketball team to the White House on May 31.

The President declared a major disaster in Montana and ordered Federal aid to supplement State, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the area affected by a severe winter storm and straight-line winds on April 15 and 16.

May 25

In the morning, in the Grand Ballroom of the InterContinental Asiana Saigon hotel, the President met with U.S. consulate personnel and family members. Then, he traveled to the GEM Center.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Toko Name, Japan, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, upon arrival in Toko Name, the President traveled to Shima City, Japan. Then, he traveled to the Shima Kanko Hotel, The Classic, where he remained overnight.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rebecca F. Dye to be a Commissioner on the Federal Maritime Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas Atkin to be Assistant Secretary for Homeland Defense at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel P. Feehan to be Assistant Secretary for Readiness at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Marguerite Salazar to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Registered Agents and Brokers.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peter M. McKinley to be Ambassador to Brazil.

The President announced his intention to appoint Sam W. Brown, Jr., as a member of the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Larry Mayer as a member of the Arctic Research Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Phyliss Craig-Taylor, Marian Wright Edelman, and Lillian Lowery as members of the President's Board of Advisers on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

May 26

In the morning, the President traveled to Ise, Japan, where he visited the Ise Jingu Shrine and participated in a tree-planting ceremony with Group of Seven (G–7) leaders.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Shima City, where, in the Café & Wine Bar Lien at the Shima Kanko Hotel, The Classic, he attended session one of the G–7 summit, a working lunch. Then, also at the Shima Kanko Hotel, in the Sunset Garden, he participated in a family photograph with G–7 leaders, followed by sessions two and three of the G–7 summit in the Guest Lounge.

In the evening, in La Mer The Classic restaurant at the Shima Kanko Hotel, the President attended session four of the G–7 summit, a working dinner.

May 27

In the morning, in the Guest Lounge of the Shima Kanko Hotel, the President attended a Group of Seven (G–7) meeting on energy and climate change. Then, also at the Shima Kanko Hotel, in Shinju Hall, he participated in a G–7 leaders outreach session, followed by a family photograph and working lunch, with leaders from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Laos, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka. Also participating were officials from the United Nations, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and African Union.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Iwakuni, Japan. Later, he traveled to Hiroshima, Japan, where, at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, he and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan visited the display for Sadako Sasaki, a young girl who survived the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima by the U.S., but died several years later of leukemia caused by radiation exposure. After viewing the display, he presented paper cranes to two local school children in memory of Sadako and signed the guest book. Then, at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, he and Prime Minister Abe participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph commemorating the victims of the bombing. Later, after delivering remarks at Peace Memorial Park, he met briefly with two survivors of the bombing: Sunao Tsuboi, chairman of the Hiroshima Prefectural Confederation of A-bomb Sufferers Organization, and Shigeaki Mori, who created a memorial for U.S. prisoners of war killed in the bombing.

In the evening, the President traveled to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, AK, crossing the International Date Line and arriving in the morning. Then, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

May 30

In the morning, in the State Dining Room, the President hosted a Memorial Day breakfast reception honoring military service organizations, Gold Star Mothers, Gold Star Wives, veterans service organizations, and senior military leadership. Later, he traveled to Arlington, VA, where, at Arlington National Cemetery, he participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Elkhart, IN, on June 1.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Colorado Springs, CO, on

June 2 to deliver the commencement address at the U.S. Air Force Academy

May 31

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

June 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Situation Room, he had a briefing on U.S. efforts to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization and other counterterrorism issues.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Elkhart, IN. While en route aboard Air Force One, he received a briefing on the shooting at the University of California, Los Angeles in Los Angeles, CA. Also in the afternoon, while at Concord Community High School, he visited with Lester Townsend, a 108-year-old resident of South Bend, IN.

In the evening, the President traveled to Colorado Springs, CO. Upon arrival, he traveled to the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Colorado Springs, where he remained overnight.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Miami, FL, on June 3.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Palm City, FL, on June 3 and 4.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the Super Bowl 50 Champion Denver Broncos to the White House on June 6.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore to the White House on August 2.

June 2

In the afternoon, in Colorado Springs, CO, following his U.S. Air Force Academy commencement address in Falcon Stadium, the President participated in an interview in the Falcon locker room with Megan Schrader of the Colorado Springs Gazette. Later, he traveled to Peterson Air Force Base, CO, where he visited briefly with Maj. Alex Turner, USAF, the Thunderbird pilot whose F–16 aircraft crashed shortly after a flyover maneuver at the commencement ceremony, and thanked the first responders who acted quickly to tend to Maj. Turner. Then, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

June 3

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Miami Beach, FL, where, at a private residence, he attended a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee roundtable fundraiser.

In the evening, the President traveled to Miami, FL. Later, he traveled to Palm City, FL. Upon arrival, he traveled to the Floridian National Golf Club, where he remained overnight.

The President announced his intention to appoint Micah Fialka-Feldman and Betty Williams as members of the President's Committee for People With Intellectual Disabilities.

The President announced his intention to appoint Elie Wiesel as a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

The President announced his intention to appoint Donald L. Pereira as a Commissioner on the U.S. Section of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Tod Sedgwick as a member of the World War I Centennial Commission.

June 4

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Yolanda "Lonnie" Williams to offer his condolences for the passing of her husband Muhammad Ali, express how fortunate he and Mrs. Obama felt to have met him, and note his remarkable life and career.

June 5

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Sen. Bernard Sanders to discuss the Democratic Presidential primary process. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

June 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Maj. Gen. John "J.T." Thomson, USA, commanding general of the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, TX, to convey his condolences to the families, friends, and colleagues of the nine soldiers who died in flash flooding during a training exercise at Fort Hood on June 2 and thank Maj. Gen. Thomson, the leaders of Fort Hood, and the soldiers and first responders who coordinated search-and-recovery operations.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Warsaw, Poland, and then to Spain, from July 4 through 11.

June 7

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India had a working lunch. Vice President Joe Biden also attended. Later, in the Map Room, the President recorded a video message offering his endorsement of former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in her bid to win the Democratic Presidential nomination.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with former Secretary Clinton to commend her on running a successful Presidential campaign and congratulate her on securing the delegates necessary to clinch the Democratic nomination. He also had a telephone conversation with Sen. Bernard Sanders to congratulate him on running an energizing Presidential campaign and bringing a new generation of U.S. voters into the political process.

The White House announced that the President will travel to New York City on June 8.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Sen. Bernard Sanders to the White House on June 9.

June 8

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had lunch. Later, he traveled to New York City, where, in Studio 6B at NBC Studios at Rockefeller Center, he recorded an interview with James T. Fallon, Jr., for NBC's "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon" for later broadcast.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to a private residence, where he attended a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee roundtable fundraiser.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

June 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, the President met with Sen. Bernard Sanders.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President participated in an interview with former New York Yankees shortstop Derek S. Jeter of the Players' Tribune website for later broadcast online. Then, from the Oval Office and Private Dining Room, he posted a video via Facebook Live on the death of Muhammad Ali and displayed some of the cherished Ali memorabilia featured in the White House. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Green Bay, WI, on June 15.

The White House announced that the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha will travel to Carlsbad Caverns National Park in Carlsbad, NM, and Yosemite National Park in California on June 17.

The President announced his intention to nominate Bonnie A. Barsamian Dunn to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation.

The President announced his intention to appoint Joyce St. Clair as a member of the Advisory Committee to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael A. Khouri to be a Commissioner on the Federal Maritime Commission.

June 10

In the morning, at the Sidwell Friends School, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughter Sasha attended the graduation ceremony of their daughter Malia.

In the afternoon, at Cafe Milano, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha had lunch.

June 11

The President declared a major disaster in Texas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding beginning on May 26 and continuing.

June 12

In the morning, the President was briefed by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco on the shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, FL. Also in the morning, he had a telephone conversation with Mayor John "Buddy" Dyer, Jr., of Orlando to offer his condolences for the nightclub shooting and pledge Federal assistance in the investigation.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President was updated on the shooting in Orlando by Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James B. Comey, Jr., and Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Monaco. White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes also attended.

The White House announced the postponement of the President's scheduled travel to Green Bay, WI, on June 15.

June 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing, which included an update on the June 12 terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, FL, from Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James B. Comey, Jr., Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh C. Johnson, National Counterterrorism Center Director Nicholas J. Rasmussen, and Deputy Attorney General Sally Quillian Yates.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in an interview with Bloomberg News Editor in Chief John Micklethwait, Washington Bureau Chief Megan Murphy, and Bloomberg Businessweek Editor in Chief Ellen Pollock for Bloomberg Businessweek.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Orlando, FL, on June 16.

June 14

In the morning, in the Diplomatic Room at the Department of the Treasury, the President met with the National Security Council to discuss efforts to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization and the investigation into the June 12 terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, FL. Vice President Joe Biden also attended.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada to accept Prime Minister Trudeau's condolences for the terrorist attack in Orlando, FL. President Obama expressed his own condolences on behalf of the American people for the death of Canadian citizen Robert Hall, who was killed by the Abu Sayyaf terrorist organization in the Philippines after being abducted in September 2015. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to confront terrorism wherever it occurs. Then, he had a telephone conversation with President François Hollande of France to accept President Hollande's condolences for the terrorist attack in Orlando. President Obama offered his own condolences on behalf of the American people for the fatal attack on French police officer Jean-Baptiste Salvaing and his partner Jessica Schneider in Magnanville, France, on June 13. The leaders renewed their shared determination to degrade and destroy ISIL and stand against the broader scourge of terrorism.

June 15

In the morning, in the Map Room and Rose Garden, the President met with Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, to accept the Dalai Lama's condolences for the June 12 terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, FL; discuss the Dalai Lama's efforts to promote compassion, empathy, and respect for others; review the situation of Tibetans in China, including efforts to foster dialogue between Tibetan and Chinese officials; and appraise cli-

mate change issues, including efforts to protect the Himalayan glaciers and the environment on the Tibetan plateau.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to accept President Erdogan's condolences for the June 12 terrorist attack in Orlando and reaffirm their shared commitment to combat all forms of violent extremism.

The White House announced that the President and First Family will travel to Carlsbad Caverns National Park in New Mexico on June 17.

June 16

In the morning, the President traveled to Orlando, FL, arriving in the afternoon. While en route aboard Air Force One, he met with Sen. Marco A. Rubio.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Amway Center, where, in the NBA Interview Room, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with local law enforcement officials, medical professionals, and other first responders to thank them for their actions in responding to the June 12 terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando. Then, also at the Amway Center, in the practice gym, they met with families of victims of the attack and some survivors of the shooting. Later, they traveled to the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, where they laid flowers at a public memorial site dedicated to the victims of the attack.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Deputy Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia to the White House on June 17.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark D. Acton to be a Commissioner on the Postal Regulatory Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kamala Shirin Lakhdhir to be Ambassador to Malaysia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Andrew R. Young to be Ambassador to Burkina Faso.

The President announced his intention to nominate Shirley Woodward to be Inspector General of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The President announced his intention to appoint Arthur Bienenstock as a member of the National Science Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the National Cancer Advisory Board:

Francis Ali-Osman;
Lawrence Gostin;
Scott Hiebert;
Electra D. Paskett;
Nancy Raab-Traub; and
Margaret R. Spitz.

June 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Deputy Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Later, he, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Roswell, NM, arriving in the afternoon. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Brendan Cox, husband of the late Jo Cox, the British Member of Parliament who was killed after a meeting with her constituents in Birstall, United Kingdom, on June 16, to offer his condolences on behalf of the American people.

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Carlsbad, NM, where they toured Carlsbad Caverns National Park with Park Ranger Valerie Gohlke.

In the evening, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha traveled to Atwater, CA. Upon arrival at Castle Airport, they traveled to the Majestic Yosemite Hotel, where they remained overnight.

June 18

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to a park facility on the Lower Yosemite Falls Loop, where they visited with children taking part in an "Every Kid in a Park" initiative event and participated in a photo opportunity. Later, also on the Lower Yosemite Falls Loop, he recorded an interview with

Richard Bacon, host of National Geographic's "Explorer" program, for later broadcast. Then, also on the Lower Yosemite Falls Loop, he recorded a virtual reality promotional video with Yosemite National Park Superintendent Don Neubacher

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha toured sections of Yosemite National Park, including Glacier Point. Later, they returned to the Majestic Yosemite Hotel, where they remained overnight.

In the evening, the President posted an entry to his Facebook feed describing his visit to Carlsbad Caverns and Yosemite National Parks to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service and promote the White House's "Every Kid in a Park" initiative.

June 19

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha hiked sections of Yosemite National Park.

In the afternoon, at the Ahwahnee Meadow landing zone, the President visited with park rangers from the National Park Service and thanked them for their service in helping to preserve U.S. wilderness and parklands. Then, he, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Malia and Sasha returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, upon arrival at Joint Base Andrews, while still aboard Air Force One, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters finished watching game 7 of the National Basketball Association Finals between the Golden State Warriors and the Cleveland Cavaliers.

June 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the East Room, the President visited with members of the 2015 U.S. Solheim Cup golf team and participated in a photo opportunity. Then, he had a telephone conversation with President-elect Pedro Pablo Kuczynski of Peru to congratulate him on his victory in the Presidential election, commend the Peruvian people for again demonstrating their commitment to democratic values through a peaceful election process, and discuss Peru-U.S. relations, including expanded economic ties under the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The White House announced that the President will sign H.R. 2756, the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act, in the South Court Auditorium on June 23.

The White House announced that the President will travel to San Jose, CA.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the inaugural ceremony of the expansion of the Panama Canal in Panama City, Panama, on June 26:

Jill T. Biden (head of delegation);
John D. Feeley;
William R. Brownfield;
Kurt W. Tidd; and
Mari del Carmen Aponte.

June 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Bethesda, MD, where, at the Military Advanced Training Center of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, he visited with wounded U.S. servicemembers, veterans, and family members. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will award the Medal of Honor to Lt. Col. Charles Kettles, USA (Ret.), for conspicuous gallantry during the Vietnam war, on July 18.

June 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President posted an entry to his Facebook feed in honor of the late Jo Cox, the British Member of Parliament who was killed after a meeting with her constituents in Birstall, United Kingdom, on June 16. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State John F. Kerry. Then, he had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Mike Sullivan of the National Hockey League's Pittsburgh

Penguins to congratulate him on his team's victory in the Stanley Cup Championship.

The White House announced that the President will welcome the 2015 Women's National Basketball Association Champion Minnesota Lynx to the White House on June 27.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas G. Kotarac to be a member and Chairman of the Railroad Retirement Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Valerie Martinez to be a member of the National Council on the Arts.

The President announced his intention to appoint Paul Ohm and Allison B. Orris as members of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking.

The President announced his intention to appoint Lisa Pugh as a member of the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities.

The President announced his intention to appoint Trevor W. Morrison as a member of the Public Interest Declassification Board, and upon appointment, to designate him Chairperson.

The President announced his intention to appoint James E. Baker as a member of the Public Interest Declassification Board.

June 23

In the morning, President had a telephone conversation with President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya to accept President Kenyatta's condolences for the June 12 terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, FL, discuss the challenges Kenya faces in hosting hundreds of thousands of East African refugees for more than two decades and the need for strong international support, and reaffirm Kenya-U.S. relations, including security cooperation.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew. Then, he had a telephone conversation with Head Coach Tyronn Lue of the National Basketball Association's Cleveland Cavaliers to congratulate him on his team's victory in the NBA Finals. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he recorded promotional videos for the 2016 ESPY awards, residential solar installations, and BuzzFeed News's voter registration initiative.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Mountain View, CA. Upon arrival at Moffett Federal Airfield, he visited with Air Force servicemembers and family members. Then, he traveled to San Francisco, CA, arriving in the evening.

In the evening, at Twenty Five Lusk restaurant, the President had dinner with technology industry leaders, venture capitalists, and entrepreneurs. Also in the evening, he was briefed on the incoming returns for the United Kingdom's referendum vote regarding membership in the European Union. Later, he traveled to the InterContinental San Francisco hotel, where he remained overnight.

During the day, the President received a briefing on the hostage situation at a cinema complex in Viernheim, Germany, which ended with police killing the gunman.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Seattle, WA, on June 24.

June 24

In the morning, the President traveled to Stanford, CA.

In the afternoon, in Room 204 of the Memorial Auditorium at Stanford University, the President recorded a conversation about the Global Entrepreneurship Summit with Facebook, Inc., Founder and Chief Executive Officer Mark E. Zuckerberg for immediate broadcast on Facebook Live. Then, in the Pigott Theater, he participated in a Google Portal virtual question-and-answer session with Google Inc. Chief Executive Officer Sundar Pichai and entrepreneurs from London, United Kingdom; Erbil, Iraq; Seoul, South Korea; and Mexico City, Mexico. Later, he traveled to Seattle, WA, where, at the Westin Seattle hotel, he attended a fundraiser reception for Gov. Jay R. Inslee of Washington.

In the evening, the President traveled to Medina, WA. Later, he returned to the Westin Seattle hotel in Seattle, where he remained overnight.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom to discuss the outcome of the June 23 referendum on the U.K.'s membership in the European Union, in which a majority of British voters expressed their desire to leave the EU, and reaffirm U.K.-U.S. relations.

Also during the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to discuss the British people's decision to leave the European Union, express their mutual regret at the decision, pledge that the economic and financial teams of the Group of Seven nations will coordinate closely to ensure a continued focus on financial stability and economic growth, and underscore the strength of transatlantic ties between Germany, the EU, and the U.S., as represented by the upcoming NATO summit in Warsaw, Poland, on July 8 and 9.

June 25

In the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Gov. Earl R. Tomblin of West Virginia to discuss the recent flooding, offer his condolences for the loss of life, and offer Federal assistance.

The President declared a major disaster in West Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides beginning on June 22 and continuing.

June 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, the President participated in a credentialing ceremony for newly appointed Ambassadors to the U.S: Leonidas Pantelides of Cyprus, Carlos Manuel Sada Solana of Mexico, Mohamedoun Daddah of Mauritania, Gladys Marithza Ruiz Sanchez of Guatemala, Essomba Etoundi of Cameroon, Theocharis Lalacos of Greece, Anthony W.J Phillips-Spencer of Trinidad and Tobago, Claudia Ivette Canjura de Centeno of El Salvador, Christophe Pierre of the Holy See (Vatican City), Tihomir Anguelov Stoytchev of Bulgaria, Dina Khalil Tawfiq Kawar of Jordan.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the State Dining Room, the President recorded an interview with Steve Inskeep of NPR for later broadcast.

June 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter.

During the day, the President was briefed by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco on the terrorist attack on Atatürk International Airport in Istanbul, Turkey.

June 29

In the morning, the President traveled to Ottawa, Canada.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the National Gallery of Canada, where, in the Canadian Galleries, he participated in a North American Leaders' Summit working session with Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada and President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico. The session was also attended by U.S. National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice, Secretary of State John F. Kerry, Secretary of Commerce Penny S. Prtizker, and Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh C. Johnson; Mexico's Secretary of Economy Ildefonso Guajardo Villarreal, Secretary of Foreign Relations Claudia Ruiz Massieu Salinas, Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources Rafael Pacchiano Alaman, and Secretary of Finance and Public Credit Luis Videragay Caso; and Canada's Minister of International Trade Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Catherine McKenna, Ambassador to U.S. David B. MacNaughton, and Ambassador to Mexico Pierre Alarie. Then, on the Gallery grounds along the banks of the Ottawa River, they participated in a North American Lead-

ers' Summit family photograph, followed by a working lunch in the Garden Court.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to the Parliament Buildings, where, in the Rotunda, he participated in an official arrival ceremony with Prime Minister Trudeau and his wife Sophie Grégoire-Trudeau, Speaker of the House of Commons Geoff Regan, Speaker of the Senate George J. Furey, and other Canadian officials and signed the guest book. Then, in the Cabinet Room, he met with Prime Minister Trudeau.

In the evening, in Room 100 of the Sir John A. MacDonald Building at Parliament Hill, the President visited with U.S. Embassy personnel and their families. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to express his condolences for the terrorist attack on Atatürk International Airport in Istanbul, Turkey, on June 28, offer U.S. assistance to support Turkish authorities in their investigation, and pledge to continue working with Turkey and all other partners and allies to fight terrorism. President Obama also commended President Erdogan and his Government for their leadership in reaching a deal to normalize relations with Israel and in taking steps to ease tensions with Russia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Debra Satz to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities.

The President announced his intention to nominate W. Stuart Symington to be Ambassador to Nigeria.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jason D. Tulley to be a judge on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The President announced his intention to appoint Kody H. Kinsley as Assistant Secretary for Management at the Department of the Treasury.

June 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with 13-year-old Ismael Torres-Castrodad, the first-ever March of Dimes National Ambassador from Puerto Rico, and his parents Isamari Castrodad and Ismael Torres, Sr.

Appendix B—Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted January 11

Raymond G. Farmer,
of South Carolina, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Registered Agents and Brokers for a term of 1 year (new position).

Kelly Keiderling-Franz,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.

Thomas McLeary,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Registered Agents and Brokers for a term of 2 years (new position).

John Mark McWatters,
of Texas, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank of the U.S. for a term expiring January 20, 2019, vice Sean Robert Mulvaney, term expired.

Nelson Reyneri,
of Washington, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation for a term expiring December 17, 2018, vice Matthew Maxwell Taylor Kennedy, term expired.

Michael J. Rothman,
of Minnesota, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Registered Agents and Brokers for a term of 2 years (new position).

Stephen Michael Schwartz,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federal Republic of Somalia.

Heather Ann Steinmiller,
of Pennsylvania, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Registered Agents and Brokers for a term of 2 years (new position).

Todd A. Weiler,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Jessica Lynn Wright, resigned.

Withdrawn January 11

Phillip H. Cullom,
of Illinois, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Sharon E. Burke, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on November 19, 2015.

Patricia M. Loui-Schmicker,
of Hawaii, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank of the U.S. a term expiring January 20, 2019 (reappointment), which was sent to the Senate on March 16, 2015.

Submitted January 12

Winfield D. Ong,
of Indiana, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Indiana, vice Sarah Evans Barker, retired.

Donald Karl Schott,
of Wisconsin, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit, vice Terence T. Evans, deceased.

Myra C. Selby,
of Indiana, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit, vice John Daniel Tinder, retired.

Submitted January 28

Terrence J. Campbell,
of Kansas, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Kansas, vice Kathryn H. Vratil, retired.

Jennifer Klemetsrud Puhl,
of North Dakota, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Eighth Circuit, vice Kermit Edward Bye, retired.

Submitted February 1

R. David Harden,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, vice Nancy E. Lindborg.

Withdrawn February 1

John Morton,
of Massachusetts, to be Executive Vice President of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, vice Mimi E. Alemayehou, which was sent to the Senate on June 16, 2015.

Submitted February 4

Patrick A. Burke,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Columbia for the term of 4 years, vice Edwin Donovan Sloane, retired.

Stephanie A. Finley,
of Louisiana, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Louisiana, vice Richard T. Haik, Sr., retired.

Claude J. Kelly III,
of Louisiana, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Louisiana, vice Ivan L. R. Lemelle, retired.

Submitted February 11

Abdul K. Kallon,
of Alabama, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit, vice Joel F. Dubina, retired.

John B. King,
of New York, to be Secretary of Education, vice Arne Duncan.

Submitted February 22

Christine Ann Elder,
of Kentucky, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Liberia.

Elizabeth Holzhall Richard,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Lebanese Republic.

Submitted February 24

Carla D. Hayden,
of Maryland, to be Librarian of Congress for a term of 10 years, vice James H. Billington.

Submitted February 25

Donald W. Beatty,
of South Carolina, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of South Carolina, vice Cameron M. Currie, retired.

Donald C. Coggins, Jr.,
of South Carolina, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of South Carolina, vice Joseph F. Anderson, Jr., retired.

Lucy Haeran Koh,
of California, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit, vice Harry Pregerson, retired.

Submitted March 3

Christopher James Brummer,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Commissioner of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 19, 2016, vice Mark P. Wetjen, resigned.

Christopher James Brummer,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Commissioner of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission for a term expiring June 19, 2021 (reappointment).

Susan Louise Castaneda,
of California, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Registered Agents and Brokers for a term of 1 year (new position).

Roberto R. Herencia,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation for a term expiring December 17, 2018 (reappointment).

Brian D. Quintenz,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Commissioner of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission for a term expiring April 13, 2020, vice Scott O'Malia, resigned.

Withdrawn March 3

Cassandra Q. Butts,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Representative of the United States of America to the 70th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, which was sent to the Senate on September 10, 2015.

Barbara Lee,
of California, to be a Representative of the United States of America to the 70th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, which was sent to the Senate on September 10, 2015.

Therese W. McMillan,
of California, to be Federal Transit Administrator, vice Peter M. Rogoff, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on January 8, 2015.

Christopher H. Smith,
of New Jersey, to be a Representative of the United States of America to the 70th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, which was sent to the Senate on September 10, 2015.

Submitted March 15

Walter David Counts III,
of Texas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Texas, vice Robert A. Junell, retired.

E. Scott Frost,
of Texas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Texas, vice Sam R. Cummings, retired.

Rebecca Ross Haywood,
of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit, vice Marjorie O. Rendell, retired.

James Wesley Hendrix,
of Texas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Texas, vice Jorge A. Solis, retiring.

Irma Carrillo Ramirez,
of Texas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Texas, vice Terry R. Means, retired.

Danny C. Reeves,
of Kentucky, to be a member of the U.S. Sentencing Commission for a term expiring October 31, 2021, vice Dabney Langhorne Friedrich, term expired.

Karen Gren Scholer,
of Texas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Texas, vice Richard A. Schell, retired.

Kathleen Marie Sweet,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of New York, vice William M. Skretny, retired.

Submitted March 16

Merrick B. Garland,
of Maryland, to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, vice Antonin Scalia, deceased.

Submitted March 17

Lisabeth Tabor Hughes,
of Kentucky, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit, vice Boyce F. Martin, Jr., retired.

Heidi Neel Biggs,
of Oregon, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2017, vice Eric J. Tanenblatt, term expired.

Almo J. Carter,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Commissioner of the U.S. Parole Commission for a term of 6 years, vice Patricia Cushwa, term expired.

James Xavier Dempsey,
of California, to be a member of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board for a term expiring January 29, 2022 (reappointment).

Larry T. Glenn,
of the Virgin Islands, to be a Commissioner of the U.S. Parole Commission for a term of 6 years, vice Isaac Fulwood, Jr., retired.

Anne Hall,
of Maine, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Lithuania.

Westley Watende Omari Moore,
of Maryland, to be member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2016, vice Stan Z. Soloway, term expired.

Westley Watende Omari Moore,
of Maryland, to be member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring October 6, 2021 (reappointment).

Jeffrey A. Rosen,
of Virginia, to be a Governor of the U.S. Postal Service for a term expiring December 8, 2021, vice Louis J. Giuliano, term expired.

Douglas Barry Wilson,
of Delaware, to be a member of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy for a term expiring July 1, 2017, vice Elizabeth F. Bagley, term expired.

Withdrawn March 17

Brad R. Carson,
of Oklahoma, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, vice Jessica Garfola Wright, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on July 8, 2015.

Submitted April 5

David C. Nye,
of Idaho, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Idaho, vice Edward J. Lodge, retired.

Submitted April 7

Dimitri Frank Kusnezov,
of California, to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, National Nuclear Security Administration, vice Donald L. Cook, resigned.

Matthew Lehrich,
of Massachusetts, to be Assistant Secretary for Communications and Outreach, Department of Education, vice Peter Cunningham.

Amy McIntosh,
of New York, to be Assistant Secretary for Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, Department of Education, vice Carmel Martin, resigned.

Antonia Whalen,
of Illinois, to be Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Education, vice Deborah S. Delisle, resigned.

Withdrawn April 7

Karl Boyd Brooks,
of Kansas, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Craig E. Hooks, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on May 14, 2015.

Submitted April 14

Beth M. Andrus,
of Washington, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Washington, vice Robert S. Lasnik, retired.

J. Michael Diaz,
of Washington, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Washington, vice James L. Robart, retiring.

Kathleen M. O'Sullivan,
of Washington, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Washington, vice Marsha J. Pechman, retired.

Submitted April 18

Susan Faye Beard,
of Maryland, to be Inspector General of the Department of Energy, vice Gregory H. Friedman, resigned.

Susan S. Gibson,
of Virginia, to be Inspector General of the National Reconnaissance Office (new position).

Mary Beth Leonard,
of Massachusetts, to be Representative of the United States of America to the African Union, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Lawrence Robert Silverman,
of Massachusetts, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the State of Kuwait.

Submitted April 20

David V. Brewer,
of Oregon, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute for a term expiring September 17, 2016 (reappointment).

Gayle A. Nachtigal,
of Oregon, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute for a term expiring September 17, 2018 (reappointment).

Geeta Pasi,
of New York, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Chad.

Submitted April 25

Peggy E. Gustafson,
of Maryland, to be Inspector General, Department of Commerce, vice Todd J. Zinser, retired.

Annette Adele Evans Smith,
of Alaska, to be a member of the National Council on the Arts for a term expiring September 3, 2020, vice Irvin M. Mayfield, Jr., term expired.

Submitted April 28

Leslie Greene Bowman,
of Virginia, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2022, vice Martha Wagner Weinberg, term expired.

Kent Yoshiho Hirozawa,
of New York, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring August 27, 2021 (reappointment).

Angela L. Kokosko Ripley,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Registered Agents and Brokers for a term of 2 years (new position).

Gail H. Marcus,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board for a term expiring October 18, 2018, vice Jessie Hill Roberson, term expired.

Kathleen Marie Marshall,
of Nevada, to be a member of the Election Assistance Commission for a term expiring December 12, 2019, vice Rosemary E. Rodriguez, term expired.

George Sanchez,
of California, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2022, vice Dorothy Kosinski, term expired.

Patricia D. Barksdale,
of Florida, to be U.S. District Judge for the Middle District of Florida, vice John E. Steele, retired.

Todd E. Edelman,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Columbia, vice Richard W. Roberts, retired.

William F. Jung,
of Florida, to be U.S. District Judge for the Middle District of Florida, vice Anne C. Conway, retired.

Philip R. Lammens,
of Florida, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Florida, vice John Richard Smoak, retired.

Florence Y. Pan,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Columbia, vice Reggie B. Walton, retired.

Regina M. Rodriguez,
of Colorado, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Colorado, vice Robert E. Blackburn, retired.

Patricia Ann Timmons-Goodson,
of North Carolina, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina, vice Malcolm J. Howard, retired.

Anne Rachel Traum,
of Nevada, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Nevada, vice Robert Clive Jones, retired.

Submitted May 11

Blair Anderson,
of California, to be Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy, vice Peter M. Rogoff, resigned.

Carol Z. Perez,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Chile.

J. Patricia Wilson Smoot,
of Maryland, to be a Commissioner of the U.S. Parole Commission for a term of 6 years (reappointment).

Robert M. Tobias,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Internal Revenue Service Oversight Board for a term expiring September 14, 2020, vice Deborah L. Wince-Smith, term expired.

Withdrawn May 11

Seth B. Carpenter,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Matthew S. Rutherford, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on February 12, 2015.

Submitted May 18

Carole Schwartz Rendon,
of Ohio, to be U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio for the term of 4 years, vice Steven M. Dettelbach, resigned.

Frances Marie Tydingco-Gatewood,
of Guam, to be Judge for the District Court of Guam for the term of 10 years (reappointment).

Submitted May 19

Ysaÿe M. Barnwell,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the National Council on the Arts for a term expiring September 3, 2022, vice Maria Lopez De Leon, term expiring.

Rena Bitter,
of Texas, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Anne S. Casper,
of Nevada, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Burundi.

Sung Y. Kim,
of California, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of the Philippines.

Geoffrey R. Pyatt,
of California, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Greece.

Douglas Alan Silliman,
of Texas, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Iraq.

Marie L. Yovanovich,
of Connecticut, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Ukraine.

Submitted May 26

Thomas Atkin,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Eric Rosenbach, resigned.

Rebecca F. Dye,
of North Carolina, to be a Federal Maritime Commissioner for the term expiring June 30, 2020 (reappointment).

Daniel P. Feehan,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Frederick Vollrath, resigned.

Peter Michael McKinley,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Marguerite Salazar,
of Colorado, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Registered Agents and Brokers for a term of 2 years (new position).

Submitted June 6

Daniel J. Becker,
of Utah, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute for a term expiring September 17, 2016 (reappointment).

Christopher E. O'Connor,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Congressional and Legislative Affairs), vice Joan M. Evans, resigned.

Submitted June 9

Bonnie A. Barsamian Dunn,
of New York, to be a Director of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation for a term expiring December 31, 2017, vice Orlan Johnson, resigned.

Michael A. Khouri,
of Kentucky, to be a Federal Maritime Commissioner for a term expiring June 30, 2021 (reappointment).

Withdrawn June 9

Cassandra Q. Butts,
of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, which was sent to the Senate on February 5, 2015.

Submitted June 16

Mark D. Acton,
of Kentucky, to be a Commissioner of the Postal Regulatory Commission for a term expiring October 14, 2022 (reappointment).

Kamala Shirin Lakhdhir,
of Connecticut, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Malaysia.

Shirley Woodward,
of Virginia, to be Inspector General, Central Intelligence Agency, vice David B. Buckley, resigned.

Andrew Robert Young,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Burkina Faso.

Submitted June 23

Thomas G. Kotarac,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Railroad Retirement Board for a term expiring August 28, 2017, vice Michael Schwartz, term expired.

Valerie Martinez,
of New Mexico, to be a member of the National Council on the Arts for a term expiring September 3, 2022, vice Deepa Gupta, term expiring.

Submitted June 29

Debra Satz,
of California, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2022, vice Constance M. Carroll, term expired.

W. Stuart Symington,
of Missouri, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Jason D. Tulley,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Judith Nan Macaluso, retired.

Appendix C—Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

January 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: New Executive Actions To Reduce Gun Violence and Make Our Communities Safer

January 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: President's Interagency Task Force To Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons

January 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

January 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

January 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in December 2015

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on updates to U.S. Government efforts to counter violent extremism

January 10

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Announces Guests in First Lady's Box—State of the Union Address

January 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

January 12

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the terrorist attack in Istanbul, Turkey

January 13

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

January 14

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the terrorist attack in Jakarta, Indonesia

Fact sheet: The United States and Central America: Honoring Our Commitments

January 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: Maintaining Momentum in the Fight Against ISIL

January 16

Fact sheet: Improving Economic Security by Strengthening and Modernizing the Unemployment Insurance System

January 17

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by senior administration officials on Iran

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the terrorist attacks in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

January 18

Statement by the Press Secretary: The President and First Lady, Cabinet Secretaries, and Senior Administration Officials Honor Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Service

January 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: United States-Australia Cooperation: Deepening Our Strategic Partnership

January 20

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the terrorist attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan

Fact sheet: How Bold Investments by the Administration in the Auto Industry and City of Detroit Put Americans Back to Work and Strengthened the Economy

January 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit ruling in *Murray Energy Corporation, et al.* v. *Environmental Protection Agency*

Fact sheet: President Obama Hosts Over 250 Mayors To Strengthen Partnerships and Grow the Economy

Fact sheet: The Administration Announces Historic Commitments To Build Climate Resilient Communities

January 23

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the escalating violence in Yemen

January 25

Text of a Department of Justice report: Report and Recommendations Concerning the Use of Restrictive Housing

Fact sheet: Department of Justice Review of Solitary Confinement

January 26

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the publication of new regulatory changes regarding economic sanctions against Cuba

Text of a Department of the Treasury press release: Treasury and Commerce Announce Further Amendments to the Cuba Sanctions Regulations

Fact sheet: Building a 21st Century Retirement System

January 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Text: FY17 Summer EBT Proposal Fact Sheet: Ensuring adequate food for children through Summer EBT (released by the Department of Agriculture)

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Announces Major Investments in Preventing Child Hunger

January 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 142, S. 1115, and S. 1629

January 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the advance estimate of gross domestic product for the fourth quarter of 2015

Text of a Council of Economic Advisers issue brief: The Gender Pay Gap on the Anniversary of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act

Fact sheet: New Steps To Advance Equal Pay on the Seventh Anniversary of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act

Fact sheet: Cities, Utilities, and Businesses Commit to Unlocking Access to Energy Data for Building Owners and Improving Energy Efficiency

January 30

Fact sheet: President Obama Announces Computer Science for All Initiative

February 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

February 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of an on-the-record press call by National Security Council Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs Mark Feierstein, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta S. Jacobson, and Special Envoy to the Colombia Peace Process Bernard W. Aronson to preview the visit of President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon of Colombia

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco's travel to France

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Announces Steps To Increase Nation's Resilience to Earthquakes

Fact sheet: The FY2017 European Reassurance Initiative Budget Request

Fact sheet: President Obama Proposes $1.1 Billion in New Funding To Address the Prescription Opioid Abuse and Heroin Use Epidemic

February 3

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco's travel to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

February 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco's travel to the United Kingdom

Fact sheet: President Obama Proposes New "First Job" Funding To Connect Young Americans With Jobs and Skills Training To Start Their Careers

Fact sheet: President Obama's 21st Century Clean Transportation System

Fact sheet: Peace Colombia—A New Era of Partnership Between the United States and Colombia

February 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice on the 5-year anniversary of the New START Treaty's entry into force

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in January

February 6

Fact sheet: President's Budget Proposal To Advance Mission Innovation

Statement by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice on the North Korean missile launch

February 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony S. Fauci, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Principal Deputy Director Anne Schuchat

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 515, H.R. 4188, and S. 2152

Fact sheet: Preparing for and Responding to the Zika Virus at Home and Abroad

Fact sheet: U.S. Leadership in Securing First-Ever Global Carbon Emissions Standards for Commercial Airplanes

February 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest, Office of Management and Budget Director Shaun L.S. Donovan, National Economic Council Director Jeffrey D. Zients, and Domestic Policy Council Director Cecilia Muñoz on the fiscal year 2017 budget

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Supreme Court's order granting a stay in *Chamber of Commerce, et al.,* v. *Environmental Protection Agency, et al.*

Fact sheet: Cybersecurity National Action Plan

Fact sheet: President Obama Proposes New Funding To Build Resilience of Alaska's Communities and Combat Climate Change

Fact sheet: The President's Fiscal Year 2017 Budget: Overview: Meeting Our Greatest Challenges

February 10

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

February 11

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senate passage of the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Southeast Asian civil society leaders

February 12

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Fact sheet: President Obama To Designate New National Monuments in the California Desert

Fact sheet: Announcing the Winner of the Healthy Communities Challenge

Fact sheet: Unprecedented U.S.-ASEAN Relations

February 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz and National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice

February 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the terrorist attack in Ankara, Turkey

February 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Honors Extraordinary Early-Career Scientists

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 757, H.R. 907, and H.R. 3033

February 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice on civilian killings in Malakal, South Sudan

February 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest, National Governors Association Chair Governor Gary R. Herbert of Utah, and National Governors Association Vice Chair Governor Terence R. McAuliffe of Virginia

February 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest and Special Presidential

Envoy for the Global Coalition To Counter ISIL Brett H. McGurk

February 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: Protecting American Workers & Businesses: The Obama Administration's Trade Enforcement Record

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 644 and H.R. 1428

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi of China

February 25

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Text: Precision Medicine Initiative: Data Security Policy Principles and Framework

Text of a Council of Economic Advisers report: A Retrospective Assessment of Clean Energy Investments in the Recovery Act

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Announces Key Actions To Accelerate Precision Medicine Initiative

Fact sheet: White House Announces New Summer Opportunity Project

Fact sheet: Seven Years Ago, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Helped Bring Our Economy Back From the Brink of a Second Great Depression

Fact sheet: How the Recovery Act Helped Save Us From a Second Great Depression and Made Critical Investments in Our Long-Term Competitiveness

Fact sheet: The Recovery Act Made the Largest Single Investment in Clean Energy in History, Driving the Deployment of Clean Energy, Promoting Energy Efficiency, and Supporting Manufacturing

February 26

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Member Jay C. Shambaugh on the second estimate of GDP for the fourth quarter of 2015

February 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 487, H.R. 890, H.R. 3262, H.R. 4056, H.R. 4437, and S. 2109

March 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

March 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Transitional President Catherine Samba-Panza of the Central African Republic

Fact sheet: The Affordable Care Act: Healthy Communities Six Years Later

March 3

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

March 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in February

March 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: The White House Launches "The Opportunity Project," Utilizing Open Data To Build Stronger Ladders of Opportunity for All

Fact sheet: $2 Billion in New Private Sector Investments To Protect Natural Resources To Be Announced at White House Conservation Roundtable

March 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

On-the-record press call by National Security Council Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs Mark B. Feierstein, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta S. Jacobson, and Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd D. Stern on the upcoming visit of Prime Minister Justin P.J. Trudeau of Canada

Statement by the Press Secretary: Release of the President's Medical Exam

Text of a memorandum from Physician to the President Ronny L. Jackson to Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest: The President's Periodic Physical Exam

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Foreign Secretary Subrahmanyam Jaishankar of India

Fact sheet: White House Announces Doubling of TechHire Communities, and New Steps To Give More Students and Workers Tech Skills To Fuel the Next Generation of American Innovation (embargoed until March 9)

March 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on the ninth anniversary of the disappearance of Robert A. Levinson in Iran

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 238 and S. 1596

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with civil society leaders in advance of the President's trip to Cuba

Text of a Council of Economic Advisers issue brief: The Digital Divide and Economic Benefits of Broadband Access

Fact sheet: President Obama Announces ConnectALL Initiative

March 10

Fact sheet: United States-Canada Relationship

March 11

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

March 13

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the terrorist attack in Ankara, Turkey

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the terrorist attack in Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire

March 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on South Africa and the African Growth and Opportunities Act

March 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on the publication of regulatory changes to U.S. sanctions against Cuba

Text of a Department of the Treasury press release: Treasury and Commerce Announce Significant Amendments to the Cuba Sanctions Regulations Ahead of President Obama's Historic Trip to Cuba

March 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of a press call by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, Charge d'Affaires to Cu-

ba Jeffrey Delaurentis, and National Security Council Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs Mark B. Feierstein to preview the President's travel to Cuba and Argentina

Statement by the Press Secretary: Background on Judge Merrick Garland

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Executive order titled "Blocking Property of the Government of North Korea and the Workers' Party of Korea, and Prohibiting Certain Transactions With Respect to North Korea"

March 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

March 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1755, S. 1172, S. 1580, S. 1826, and S. 2426

March 19

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes's travel to Cuba

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the terrorist attack in Istanbul, Turkey

March 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, former Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez, PayPal President and Chief Executive Officer Daniel H. Schulman, and Airbnb, Inc., Chief Executive Officer and Cofounder Brian J. Chesky

Text of a letter from President Obama to Ileana R. Yarza of Havana, Cuba, sent on the first U.S.-Cuba direct mail flight, in response to a letter she sent to the White House (originally posted on the White House blog on March 17).

Text of a Department of Commerce fact sheet: Economic Development in the Wake of President Obama's Regulatory Changes on Exports and Travel to Cuba

Fact sheet: United States-Cuba Relationship

March 22

Fact sheet: Working Together To Build a Sustainable Water Future

March 23

Fact sheet: United States-Argentina Relationship

March 25

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the third estimate of GDP for the fourth quarter of 2015

March 27

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the terrorist attack in Lahore, Pakistan

March 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlut Cavusoglu of Turkey

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Announces Additional Actions To Address the Prescription Opioid Abuse and Heroin Epidemic (embargoed until March 29)

March 29

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of a press call by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, National Security Council Senior Director for Weapons of Mass Destruction and Arms Control Laura S.H. Holgate, and National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs Daniel J. Kritenbrink previewing the Nuclear Security Summit

Fact sheet: The Nuclear Security Summits: Securing the World From Nuclear Terrorism—Progress Since Prague

March 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Grants Commutations

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1831 and H.R. 4721

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with National Security Adviser Ajit Kumar Doval of India

March 31

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, and National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs Daniel J. Kritenbrink

Statement by the Press Secretary: United States National Progress Report: 2016 Nuclear Security Summit

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 2393

Fact sheet: United States Military Nuclear Material Security

Fact sheet: Transparency in the U.S. Highly Enriched Uranium Inventory

Fact sheet: Feasibility of Low Enriched Uranium Fuel in Naval Reactor Plants

April 1

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in March

Text of a National Science and Technology Council report: Advanced Manufacturing: A Snapshot of Priority Technology Areas Across the Federal Government

Text: Gift Basket on Mitigating Insider Threats

Text: Nuclear Security Summit 2016 Action Plan in Support of the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction

Text: Nuclear Security Summit 2016 Action Plan in Support of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Text: Nuclear Security Summit 2016 Action Plan in Support of the Global Initiative To Combat Nuclear Terrorism

Text: Nuclear Security Summit 2016 Action Plan in Support of the United Nations

Text: Nuclear Security Summit 2016 Action Plan in Support of the International Criminal Police Organization

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Announces New Revolutionary Fibers and Textiles Manufacturing Innovation Hub in Cambridge, MA and New Report on $2 Billion in Manufacturing R&D Investments

Fact sheet: Removal of All Highly Enriched Uranium and Plutonium From Japan's Fast Critical Assembly

Fact sheet: Nuclear Material Removal From Germany

Fact sheet: Highly Enriched Uranium Minimization Activities Since March 2014

Fact sheet: Eliminating All Highly Enriched Uranium From Argentina

Fact sheet: Eliminating All Highly Enriched Uranium From Indonesia

Fact sheet: Insider Threat Mitigation

Fact sheet: U.S. Ratification of Nuclear Security Treaties

Fact sheet: Status of the 2005 Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material

Fact sheet: Countering Nuclear Smuggling

Fact sheet: U.S. Participation in the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction

Fact sheet: U.S. Participation at the United Nations on Nuclear Security Issues

Fact sheet: U.S. Support to INTERPOL

Fact sheet: U.S. Support to the International Atomic Energy Agency for Nuclear Security

Fact sheet: United States Participation in the Global Initiative To Combat Nuclear Terrorism

Fact sheet: Gift Basket on Sustaining Action To Strengthen the Global Nuclear Security Architecture

April 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on corporate inversions

Text of a U.S. Global Change Research Program report: The Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States: A Scientific Assessment

Fact sheet: What Climate Change Means for Your Health and Family

April 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: Middle Class Economics: Strengthening Retirement Security by Cracking Down on Conflicts of Interest in Retirement Savings

April 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

April 7

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

April 8

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Jennifer B. Friedman

Statement by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice on the entry into force of the 2005 Amendment to the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials

April 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony S. Fauci, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Principal Deputy Director Anne Schuchat

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 1180

Fact sheet: White House Launches the Fair Chance Business Pledge

Fact sheet: On Equal Pay Day, President Obama To Designate National Monument Honoring Women's Equality

April 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

April 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: At White House Science Fair, President Obama Calls on This Generation of Students To Tackle the Grand Challenges of Our Time

April 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, Senior Director for European Affairs Charles A. Kupchan, and Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf Region Robert Malley to preview the President's travel to Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and Germany

April 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Text of a White House blog post by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest: President Obama and Vice President Biden's 2015 Tax Returns

Statement by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco on the third anniversary of the Boston Marathon bombings

April 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

April 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 192, S. 483, and S. 2512

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes's meeting with civil society advocates to discuss the situation in the Gulf Cooperation Council nations

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the terrorist attack in Kabul, Afghanistan

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the death of former President Patricio Aylwin Azocar of Chile

April 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes

Fact sheet: Advancing Active STEM Education for Our Youngest Learners

Fact sheet: On Every Kid in a Park Day of Action, White House Announces Commitments to Getting Nearly Half a Million Kids Outside

Fact sheet: Investing $90 Million Through ApprenticeshipUSA To Expand Proven Pathways Into the Middle Class

Fact sheet: Implementation of the U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council Strategic Partnership

Fact sheet: White House Police Data Initiative Highlights New Commitments (embargoed until April 22)

April 23

Statement by the Press Secretary: CEA report: Economic Perspectives on Incarceration and the Criminal Justice System

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco's meetings in the United Kingdom

Text of a Department of Justice press release: Department of Justice To Launch Inaugural National Reentry Week

Text of a Council of Economic Advisers report: Economic Perspectives on Incarceration and the Criminal Justice System

April 25

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, U.S. Chamber of Commerce President and Chief Executive Officer Thomas J. Donohue, and Dow Chemical Co. Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Andrew N. Liveris

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the 1-year anniversary of the earthquake in Nepal

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on the murder of U.S. Agency for International Development employee Xulhaz Mannan in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Text of a Department of Justice press release: Department of Justice Announces New Reforms To Strengthen the Federal Bureau of Prisons

Fact sheet: White House Launches New $100 Million Competition To Expand Tuition-Free Community College Programs That Connect Americans to In-Demand Jobs

April 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

April 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Foreign Secretary Subrahmanyam Jaishankar of India

April 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of a press briefing with college reporters by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on China's foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGO) management law

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the advance estimate of GDP for the first quarter of 2016

Text of a White House blog post by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman and Member Sandra E. Black: Six Recent Trends in Student Debt

Fact sheet: Taking Action To Help More Americans Manage Student Debt

April 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: During National Reentry Week, Reducing Barriers to Reentry and Employment for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Honors Americans Leading Efforts To Stop the Prescription Opioid and Heroin Epidemic

April 30

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1670, H.R. 2722, S. 719, and S. 1638

May 1

Statement from the Office of the First Lady on the President and Mrs. Obama's announcement that their daughter Malia will attend Harvard University in the fall of 2017

May 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

May 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on World Press Freedom Day

Text of a White House and Department of Education report: Giving Every Child a Fair Shot: Progress Under the Obama Administration's Education Agenda

Fact sheet: President Obama Celebrates Great Teachers and Our Nation's Educational Progress

Fact sheet: Federal Support for the Flint Water Crisis Response and Recovery

May 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

May 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Grants Commutations

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Announces Steps To Strengthen Financial Transparency, and Combat Money Laundering, Corruption, and Tax Evasion

May 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in April

May 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1493 and H.R. 2908

May 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Announces Public and Private Sector Efforts To Increase Community Resilience Through Building Codes and Standards

May 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 1890

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco's travel to Belgium

Text of a Department of Energy report: Moving Our Nation Forward, Faster: Progress Report 2016

Fact sheet: Administration Announces New Actions and Progress Made To Make American Buildings More Efficient and Save Businesses and Households on Their Energy Bills

May 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with veterans on the President's upcoming travel to Asia

May 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Text of remarks by White House Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough at an Israel Independence Day celebration at the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium on May 12

Text of a Denmark-U.S. memorandum of understanding to strengthen cooperation on offshore wind energy signed on May 4

Fact sheet: U.S.-Nordic Collaboration on Climate Change, the Arctic, and Clean Energy

May 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 32, S. 125, and S. 2755

Fact sheet: White House and Department of Labor Announce $21 Million for Summer and Year-Round Jobs for Young Americans and Launch of 16 Summer Impact Hubs

May 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Fact sheet: Growing Middle Class Paychecks and Helping Working Families Get Ahead by Expanding Overtime Pay

Fact sheet: State-by-State Breakdowns of Workers Affected by Department of Labor's Final Overtime Regulation

Fact sheet: Mitigating the Risk of Wildfires in the Wildland-Urban Interface

May 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Deputy Spokesperson Mark E. Stroh on Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes's meeting with civil society leaders on Vietnam

May 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Transcript of an on-the-record conference call by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes, U.S. Trade Representative Michael B. Froman, Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economics Adewale "Wally" Adeyemo, and National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs Daniel J. Kritenbrink on the President's trip to Vietnam and Japan

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Honors Nation's Leading Scientists and Innovators

Statement by the Press Secretary on the crash of EgyptAir Flight 804

May 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 4238, H.R. 4336, H.R. 4923, H.R. 4957, S. 1492, S. 1523, and S. 2143

May 21

Statement by Deputy National Security Spokesman Mark E. Stroh on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs Amina Chawahir Mohamed and Cabinet Secretary for Transport and Infrastructure James Wainaina Macharia of Kenya

May 23

Fact sheet: United States-Vietnam Relations

May 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz, Secretary of State John F. Kerry, and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes

Fact sheet: Enhancing U.S.-Vietnam Civil Nuclear Clean Energy Cooperation

Fact sheet: Trade and Investment With Vietnam

Fact sheet: World Humanitarian Summit—U.S. Government Priorities

May 25

Fact sheet: United States-Vietnam Education Cooperation

May 26

Fact sheet: First Ever White House Foster Care & Technology Hackathon

May 27

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the second estimate of GDP for the first quarter of 2016

Fact sheet: The G–7 Summit at Ise-Shima Japan

May 31

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

June 1

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

June 2

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Text of a White House blog post by Office of Science and Technology Policy Director John P. Holdren and Deputy Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Dan G. Utech: New Commitments To Accelerate Investment in the Clean-Energy Transformation

Fact sheet: U.S. Hosts World's Energy Ministers To Scale Up Clean Energy and Drive Implementation of the Paris Agreement

Fact sheet: Supporting Dual Language Learners in Early Learning Settings

June 3

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Jennifer B. Friedman

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Grants Commutations

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2814 and S. 184

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the employment situation in May

Statement by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice on the Leaders' Summit on Refugees to be held at the 71st session of the U.N. General Assembly

June 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

June 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's telephone conversations with Democratic Presidential candidates former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sen. Bernard Sanders

Statement by National Security Council Deputy Spokesperson Mark E. Stroh on the terrorist attack in Istanbul, Turkey

Fact sheet: U.S.-India Economic Cooperation and People-to-People Ties

Fact sheet: Framework for the U.S.-India Cyber Relationship

Fact sheet: The United States and India—Moving Forward Together on Climate Change, Clean Energy, Energy Security, and the Environment

June 8

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by National Security Council Deputy Spokesperson Mark E. Stroh on National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice's meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs Vivian Balakrishnan of Singapore

Text of a Department of Education press release: Persistent Disparities Found Through Comprehensive Civil Rights Survey Underscore Need for Continued Focus on Equity, King Says

Fact sheet: New Cities Join My Brother's Keeper Success Mentors Initiative To Combat Chronic Student Absences and Drive School and Life Success

June 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Announces the 2016–2017 National Finalists for the White House Fellows Program

Statement by the Press Secretary on House of Representatives passage of the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act

Text of a Department of Health and Human Services press release: HHS Readout of Secretary Burwell's Call With Governors To Discuss Zika Preparedness

Fact sheet: Obama Administration's Record and the LGBT Community

June 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest and Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition To Counter ISIL Brett H. McGurk

Text of a Department of Transportation press release: U.S. Transportation Secretary Foxx Approves U.S. Airlines To Begin Scheduled Service to Cuba

Fact sheet: White House Launches the Fair Chance Higher Education Pledge

June 12

Statement by the Press Secretary on the shooting in Orlando, FL

June 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 136, H.R. 433, H.R. 1132, H.R. 2458, H.R. 2928, H.R. 3082, H.R. 3274, H.R. 3601, H.R. 3735, H.R. 3866, H.R. 4046, and H.R. 4605

Text of a Council of Economic Advisers issue brief: The State of the Gender Pay Gap

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Announces Key Actions To Reduce the Organ Waiting List

Fact sheet: Government, Businesses, and Organizations Announce $50 Million in Commitments To Support Women and Girls

June 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Releases Estimated State Opioid Treatment Funding Levels Under President's Budget Proposal

Statement from the Press Secretary on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia's decision in *U.S. Telecom Association* v. *Federal Communications Commission*

June 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

June 16

Transcript of a press gaggle by Principle Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Text of a readout of the National Economic Council's meeting with Deputy Crown Prince and Minister of Defense Muhammad bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Announces Federal and Private Sector Actions on Scaling Renewable Energy and Storage With Smart Markets

June 17

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Jennifer B. Friedman

Text of a Department of Agriculture press release: Forest Service Makes It Easier for Visitors To Enjoy National Forests and Grasslands

Text: U.S. Department of the Interior Economic Report, Fiscal Year 2015

Fact sheet: New Commitments in Support of the President's Nation of Makers Initiative To Kick Off 2016 National Week of Making

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Recognizes the 100th Anniversary and Economic Benefits of America's National Parks

Fact sheet: New Steps To Reduce Unnecessary Occupation Licenses That Are Limiting Worker Mobility and Reducing Wages

June 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Text of a White House blog post by Council of Economic Advisers Director Jeffrey D. Zients: Strengthening and Celebrating America's Capacity for Innovation

Fact sheet: President Obama Announces Winner of New Smart Manufacturing Innovation Institute and New Manufacturing Hub Competitions

June 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary: Impact Report: 100 Examples of President Obama's Leadership in Science, Technology, and Innovation

Statement by White House Counsel W. Neil Eggleston on the American Bar Association's evaluation of Supreme Court nominee Merrick B. Garland

Text of a statement by American Bar Association Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary Chair Karol Corbin Walker to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary on the nomination of Merrick B. Garland to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court

Text of a letter from American Bar Association Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary Chair Karol Corbin Walker to White House Counsel W. Neil Eggleston on the nomination of Merrick B. Garland to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court

Fact sheet: Enabling a New Generation of Aviation Technology

June 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on congressional action on legislation to combat the Zika virus

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 812, H.R. 1762, H.R. 2137, H.R. 2212, and S. 2276

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2576

Fact sheet: As the Global Entrepreneurship Summit Begins in Silicon Valley, New Announcements To Support Inclusive Entrepreneurship & Innovation at Home

June 23

Transcript of a press gaggle Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by National Security Adviser Susan E. Rice on progress in Colombia's peace process

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Announces Columbus, OH, Winner of the $40 Million Smart City Challenge To Pioneer the Future of Transportation

June 24

Transcript of a press gaggle Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Designates Stonewall National Monument

Text of a Department of Health and Human Services press release: HHS Readout of Zika Preparedness Response

Fact sheet: President Obama Announces New Actions To Reduce Recidivism and Promote Reintegration of Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

Fact sheet: Global Entrepreneurship Summit

June 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric H. Schultz

Fact sheet: Expanding the Tech Economies of Communities Across the Country

June 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary on the terrorist attack at Ataturk International Airport in Istanbul, Turkey

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Jason L. Furman on the third estimate of GDP for the first quarter of 2016

Statement by National Security Council Spokesperson Edward C. "Ned" Price on Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Benjamin J. Rhodes's meeting with Vietnamese American leaders

June 29

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest and Senior Adviser to the President Brian C. Deese

Statement by the Press Secretary: North American Climate, Clean Energy, and Environment Partnership Action Plan

Text of a blog post by Breast Cancer Research Foundation Chief Mission Officer Marc Hurlbert: Why Vice President Biden's Cancer Moonshot Is a Game Changer (published June 28 on huffingtonpost.com)

Text of a readout of Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco's call with Minister of the Interior Efkan Ala of Turkey

Fact sheet: United States Key Deliverables for the 2016 North American Leaders' Summit

Fact sheet: Promoting and Protecting the Human Rights of LGBT Persons

June 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3209, S. 337, S. 2133, S. 2328, and S. 2487

Fact sheet: Launching the Data-Driven Justice Initiative: Disrupting the Cycle of Incarceration

Fact sheet: White House Launches a Call to Action for Private Sector Engagement on the Global Refugee Crisis

Fact sheet: New Steps Toward Ensuring Openness and Transparency in Government

Appendix D—Presidential Documents Published in the *Federal Register*

This appendix lists Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the Federal Register. *The texts of the documents are printed in the* Federal Register *(F.R.) at the citations listed below. The documents are also printed in title 3 of the* Code of Federal Regulations *and in the Compilation of Presidential Documents.*

PROCLAMATIONS

Proc. No.	*Date 2016*	*Subject*	*81 F.R. Page*
9388	Jan. 11	To Take Certain Actions Under the African Growth and Opportunity Act	1851
9389	Jan. 15	Religious Freedom Day, 2016	3689
9390	Jan. 15	Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday, 2016	3691
9391	Jan. 29	American Heart Month, 2016	5875
9392	Jan. 29	National African American History Month, 2016	5877
9393	Jan. 29	National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month, 2016	5879
9394	Feb. 12	Establishment of the Castle Mountains National Monument	8365
9395	Feb. 12	Establishment of the Mojave Trails National Monument	8371
9396	Feb. 12	Establishment of the Sand to Snow National Monument	8379
9397	Feb. 13	Death of Antonin Scalia	8387
9398	Feb. 24	Modifying and Continuing the National Emergency With Respect to Cuba and Continuing To Authorize the Regulation of the Anchorage and Movement of Vessels	9737
9399	Feb. 29	American Red Cross Month, 2016	11091
9400	Feb. 29	Irish-American Heritage Month, 2016	11093
9401	Feb. 29	National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, 2016	11095
9402	Feb. 29	Women's History Month, 2016	11097
9403	Mar. 1	Read Across America Day, 2016	11653
9404	Mar. 4	National Consumer Protection Week, 2016	12571
9405	Mar. 7	Death of Nancy Reagan	12789
9406	Mar. 14	To Take Certain Actions Under the African Growth and Opportunity Act	14683
9407	Mar. 18	National Poison Prevention Week, 2016	15611
9408	Mar. 22	Honoring the Victims of the Attack in Brussels, Belgium	17059
9409	Mar. 24	Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy, 2016	17599
9410	Mar. 30	Cesar Chavez Day, 2016	19465

PROCLAMATIONS (Continued)

Proc. No.	*Date 2016*	*Subject*	*81 F.R. Page*
9411	Mar. 31	National Cancer Control Month, 2016	19849
9412	Mar. 31	National Child Abuse Prevention Month, 2016	19851
9413	Mar. 31	National Financial Capability Month, 2016	19853
9414	Mar. 31	National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, 2016	19855
9415	Apr. 1	National Donate Life Month, 2016	20211
9416	Apr. 1	National Public Health Week, 2016	20213
9417	Apr. 1	World Autism Awareness Day, 2016	20215
9418	Apr. 8	National Crime Victims' Rights Week, 2016	22013
9419	Apr. 8	National Volunteer Week, 2016	22015
9420	Apr. 8	Pan American Day and Pan American Week, 2016	22017
9421	Apr. 8	National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, 2016	22019
9422	Apr. 11	National Equal Pay Day, 2016	22171
9423	Apr. 12	Establishment of the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument	22505
9424	Apr. 15	National Park Week, 2016	23415
9425	Apr. 18	Education and Sharing Day, U.S.A., 2016	23557
9426	Apr. 21	Earth Day, 2016	24453
9427	Apr. 27	National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, 2016	26089
9428	Apr. 27	Law Day, U.S.A., 2016	26091
9429	Apr. 27	Loyalty Day, 2016	26093
9430	Apr. 27	Workers Memorial Day, 2016	26095
9431	Apr. 28	Jewish American Heritage Month, 2016	26661
9432	Apr. 28	National Foster Care Month, 2016	26663
9433	Apr. 28	National Mental Health Awareness Month, 2016	26665
9434	Apr. 29	Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, 2016	26979
9435	Apr. 29	National Building Safety Month, 2016	26981
9436	Apr. 29	Older Americans Month, 2016	26983
9437	Apr. 29	National Charter Schools Week, 2016	26985
9438	Apr. 29	National Small Business Week, 2016	26987
9439	Apr. 29	National Teacher Appreciation Day and National Teacher Appreciation Week, 2016	26989
9440	Apr. 29	Public Service Recognition Week, 2016	26991
9441	May 4	National Day of Prayer, 2016	27983
9442	May 5	Military Spouse Appreciation Day, 2016	28687
9443	May 6	National Women's Health Week, 2016	29461
9444	May 6	Mother's Day, 2016	29463
9445	May 13	Emergency Medical Services Week, 2016	31477
9446	May 13	National Defense Transportation Day and National Transportation Week, 2016	31479

PROCLAMATIONS (Continued)

Proc. No.	*Date 2016*	*Subject*	*81 F.R. Page*
9447	May 13	National Hurricane Preparedness Week, 2016	31481
9448	May 13	Peace Officers Memorial Day and Police Week, 2016	31483
9449	May 13	World Trade Week, 2016	31485
9450	May 18	National Hepatitis Testing Day, 2016	32609
9451	May 20	National Safe Boating Week, 2016	33325
9452	May 20	Armed Forces Day, 2016	33327
9453	May 20	National Maritime Day, 2016	33329
9454	May 26	Prayer for Peace, Memorial Day, 2016	34859
9455	May 31	African-American Music Appreciation Month, 2016	36127
9456	May 31	Great Outdoors Month, 2016	36129
9457	May 31	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month, 2016	36131
9458	May 31	National Caribbean-American Heritage Month, 2016	36133
9459	May 31	National Oceans Month, 2016	36135
9460	June 10	Flag Day and National Flag Week, 2016	39173
9461	June 12	Honoring the Victims of the Attack in Orlando, Florida	39539
9462	June 15	World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, 2016	39867
9463	June 16	National Week of Making, 2016	40471
9464	June 17	Father's Day, 2016	40473
9465	June 24	Establishment of the Stonewall National Monument	42215
9466	June 30	To Implement the World Trade Organization Declaration on the Expansion of Trade in Information Technology Products and for Other Purposes	44129

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

E.O. No.	*Date 2016*	*Subject*	*81 F.R. Page*
13716	Jan. 16	Revocation of Executive Orders 13574, 13590, 13622, and 13645 With Respect to Iran, Amendment of Executive Order 13628 With Respect to Iran, and Provision of Implementation Authorities for Aspects of Certain Statutory Sanctions Outside the Scope of U.S. Commitments Under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action of July 14, 2015	3693
13717	Feb. 2	Establishing a Federal Earthquake Risk Management Standard	6407

EXECUTIVE ORDERS (Continued)

E.O. No.	*Date 2016*	*Subject*	*81 F.R. Page*
13718	Feb. 9	Commission on Enhancing National Cybersecurity	7441
13719	Feb. 9	Establishment of the Federal Privacy Council	7687
13720	Feb. 26	Delegation of Certain Authorities and Assignment of Certain Functions Under the Trade Preferences Extension Act of 2015	11089
13721	Mar. 14	Developing an Integrated Global Engagement Center To Support Government-wide Counterterrorism Communications Activities Directed Abroad and Revoking Executive Order 13584	14685
13722	Mar. 15	Blocking Property of the Government of North Korea and the Workers' Party of Korea, and Prohibiting Certain Transactions With Respect to North Korea	14943
13723	Mar. 30	Establishing the Inherent Resolve Campaign Medal	19017
13724	Apr. 8	Amending Executive Order 12137	22021
13725	Apr. 15	Steps To Increase Competition and Better Inform Consumers and Workers To Support Continued Growth of the American Economy	23417
13726	Apr. 19	Blocking Property and Suspending Entry Into the United States of Persons Contributing to the Situation in Libya	23559
13727	May 6	Facilitation of a Presidential Transition	29465
13728	May 18	Wildland-Urban Interface Federal Risk Mitigation	32223
13729	May 18	A Comprehensive Approach to Atrocity Prevention and Response	32611
13730	May 20	2016 Amendments to the Manual for Courts-Martial, United States	33331
13731	June 24	Global Entrepreneurship	42221

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Doc. No.	*Date 2016*	*Subject*	*81 F.R. Page*
	Jan. 4	Memorandum: Promoting Smart Gun Technology	719
2016–05	Jan. 13	Presidential Determination: Unexpected Urgent Refugee and Migration Needs	68925
	Jan. 20	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process	3937

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS (Continued)

Doc. No.	*Date 2016*	*Subject*	*81 F.R. Page*
	Jan. 28	Memorandum: White House Cancer Moonshot Task Force	5361
	Jan. 29	Memorandum: Delegation of Certain Authority and Assignment of Certain Functions Under Section 103(a)(1)(A) and Section 103(b)(1) of the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015	5571
	Feb. 3	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in or in Relation to Côte d'Ivoire	6157
	Feb. 9	Order: Sequestration Order for Fiscal Year 2017 Pursuant to Section 251A of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act, as Amended	7693
	Feb. 22	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Libya	9329
	Mar. 1	Memorandum: Limiting the Use of Restrictive Housing by the Federal Government	11997
	Mar. 2	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Ukraine	11655
	Mar. 2	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Zimbabwe	11657
	Mar. 3	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Venezuela	11999
	Mar. 9	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran	12793
	Mar. 11	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Under Section 11 of the Export-Import Bank Reauthorization Act of 2012	14367
	Mar. 18	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Pursuant to Section 704 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016	15417
	Mar. 18	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Pursuant to Section 3139(a) and (b) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016	15419
	Mar. 18	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Pursuant to Sections 101, 201, and 202 of the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act of 2015	15421
	Mar. 18	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Pursuant to Sections 102(a), 102(c), 204, and 302 of the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act of 2015	15423
	Mar. 18	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Pursuant to Section 102(b) of the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act of 2015	18739

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS (Continued)

Doc. No.	*Date 2016*	*Subject*	*81 F.R. Page*
	Mar. 21	Memorandum: Building National Capabilities for Long-Term Drought Resilience	16053
	Mar. 29	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Significant Malicious Cyber-Enabled Activities	18737
	Mar. 29	Memorandum: Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Task Force	19015
	Mar. 30	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to South Sudan	19019
	Apr. 4	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Somalia	20217
	Apr. 12	Memorandum: Delegations of Authority Under Sections 610, 614 (a)(1), and 506 (a)(2)(A)(i)(II) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961	68927
	Apr. 29	Memorandum: Promoting Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Formerly Incarcerated Individuals	26993
	May 3	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Actions of the Government of Syria	27293
	May 9	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Central African Republic	29469
	May 10	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Pursuant to Section 3136(h) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016	31161
	May 12	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Yemen	30155
	May 17	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Burma	31487
	May 18	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Stabilization of Iraq	32219
	May 18	Memorandum: Delegation of Certain Functions and Authorities Under the North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act of 2016	37479
2016–06	May 19	Presidential Determination: Presidential Determination Pursuant to Section 1245(d)(4)(B) and (C) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012	37481
	May 24	Memorandum: Delegation of Authority Under Section 106 of the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015	35579
2016–07	June 1	Presidential Determination: Suspension of Limitations Under the Jerusalem Embassy Act	37483

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS (Continued)

Doc. No.	*Date 2016*	*Subject*	*81 F.R. Page*
	June 10	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions and Policies of Certain Members of the Government of Belarus and Other Persons To Undermine Belarus's Democratic Processes or Institutions	38879
2016–08	June 10	Presidential Determination: Proposed Agreement for Cooperation Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy	40475
	June 21	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to North Korea	40775
	June 21	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Western Balkans	40777

Subject Index

ABC, "World News Tonight With David Muir" program—875–876
Administrative Conference of the United States, Council of the—875
Aeronautics and Space Administration, National. *See* Space program
Afghanistan
  Afghan military and security forces—61, 85, 415, 495, 500, 511, 582, 620, 733–734, 767, 872
  Chief Executive Officer—872
  Democracy efforts—272
  Insurgency and terrorist attacks—508
  International assistance—690
  NATO, role—110, 415, 768
  President—627, 872
  Reconciliation efforts—621, 627, 666, 872
  Reconstruction efforts—341
  Relations with U.S.—666
  Taliban—620, 627, 660, 666, 733, 767, 872
  U.S. military forces
    Casualties—209, 455
    Deployment—115, 130, 209, 421, 455, 620, 627, 734, 768
Africa
  See also Developing countries; *specific country*
  African Union
    Peacekeeping efforts—751
    U.S. Representative—881
  Agricultural production, improvement efforts—31
  Central Africa, Lord's Resistance Army insurgent group—769
  Democracy efforts—690
  Economic growth and development—274, 690, 751
  Energy infrastructure, improvement efforts—274, 588
  West Africa, Ebola epidemic, response and containment efforts—31, 38–39, 80, 96, 273, 308, 329, 450–451, 470, 486, 510, 599, 610, 679–680, 732
Agriculture
  Domestic production, strengthening efforts—717
  International production, promotion efforts—143
Agriculture, Department of
  Flint, MI, assistance programs—539
  Funding—422
  Secretary—172, 321
AIDS. *See* HIV/AIDS; *specific country or region*
Air Force, Department of the
  Air Force Academy, U.S.—729–730, 735, 892
  Chief of Staff—729
  Secretary—555, 729
Al Qaida. *See* Terrorism
Alabama
  Disaster assistance—863
  Governor—211
Alaska
  Disaster assistance—869
  Governor—177
  Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson—889, 891
  President's visit—889, 891
Albania
  Counterterrorism efforts—881
  European integration, advancements efforts—881
  Prime Minister—881
  Relations with U.S.—881
Alfalfa Club—864
Andorra, Ambassador to U.S.—872
Appropriations. *See* Budget, Federal
Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board—886
Arctic
  Arctic Research Commission—869, 891
  Conservation efforts—238, 241–242, 588
Arctic Council—589
Argentina
  Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA), terrorist bombing in 1994—335, 343
  Buenos Aires
    Buenos Aires Metropolitan Cathedral—876
    Casa Rosada—876
    Chief of Mission's residence—876–877
    Néstor Kirchner Cultural Centre—877
    Parque de la Memoria—358–359
    Sheraton Buenos Aires Hotel & Convention Center—876
    Usina del Arte—877
  Carbon emissions, reduction efforts—334
  Counternarcotics and drug interdiction efforts—334
  Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.—334
  Economic growth and development—333, 336
  Minister of Foreign Relations, International Trade, and Culture—876
  President—332, 344, 347, 356, 358, 876–877
  President Obama's visit—332–333, 342–343, 356–358, 869, 876–877
  Relations with U.S.—333, 335, 358–359
  San Carlos de Bariloche
    Llao Llao Hotel and Resort—877
    Parque Llao Llao—877
  Science and technology, cooperation with U.S.—347
  Trade with U.S.—336

Argentina—Continued
U.S. Ambassador—876
U.S. Embassy staff, meeting with President Obama—876
Arizona
2011 shooting in Tucson—1, 3, 21
KSAZ in Phoenix—885
Arkansas, disaster assistance—866, 887
Armed Forces, U.S.
See also Defense and national security; Defense, Department of; *specific military branch*
"Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal—760
Joining Forces initiative—555–557
Military families—208, 210, 555, 697
Servicemembers
Asian American and Pacific Islander servicemembers—550
Casualties—210, 697, 699–700, 863
Deployment—209–210, 258, 263, 266, 456, 555, 767, 769
Meetings with President—863, 896
Muslim servicemembers—88
Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), treatment efforts—48, 455
POW/MIA remains, recovery efforts—615, 625, 630, 698, 748
Service and dedication—73, 208, 421, 455–456, 516, 555, 669, 697–699, 726, 730, 733, 735, 743, 774
Women servicemembers—556, 778
Armenia
Remembrance Day—478
Syrian refugees, admittance—478
Arms and munitions
See also specific country
Chemical and biological weapons—401, 412–413
Nuclear weapons and material
Nonproliferation efforts—398–401, 403–405, 407–408, 413, 584, 626, 663, 691, 744, 748, 781
Nuclear Security Summit—361, 390, 395–396, 398–407, 413–414, 454, 878–879
Security—393, 395–401, 404–408, 412–414, 584, 663, 692
Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with Russia—412, 663
U.S. nuclear arsenal modernization—412–413
U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, reduction—401, 408, 413
Weapons of mass destruction—584, 663
Army, Department of the
Fort Hood, TX
2009 shooting—773
Soldier deaths in flash flooding—893
Secretary—759
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—63
Arts
See also Smithsonian Institution
"Hamilton" musical, White House performance by castmembers—276, 280
International Jazz Day, White House concert—525–527
PBS, "A Tribute to Ray Charles: In Performance at the White House"—191
Arts, National Council on the—883, 889, 897
Asia
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—140–143, 149–150, 274, 614, 617, 619, 624, 632, 635, 645, 651, 868
East Asia Summit—614, 619, 632, 651
East China Sea, maritime territorial disputes—658, 691
Relations with U.S.—614, 645
South China Sea, maritime territorial disputes—142, 150, 274, 393, 615, 618, 626, 632, 661–662, 691, 731–732, 887
Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders
Bullying Prevention Task Force—552
Federal programs, efforts to increase participation—550
Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, White House Initiative on—550
Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies—550
Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)—626, 750
Association of Registered Agents and Brokers, National—860, 872, 884
Atlantic magazine—863, 870
Atlantic Tunas, International Commission for the Conservation of—867
Atomic Energy Agency, International (IAEA)—396, 399, 403, 405–406, 408–409, 584
Attorney General. *See* Justice, Department of
Australia
Afghanistan, role—61
Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.—61
Defense relationship with U.S.—61
Iraq, role—61
Prime Minister—61, 860, 862, 887
Relations with U.S.—61–62
Science and technology—61
Awards. *See* Decorations, medals, and awards
Azerbaijan, nuclear security, strengthening efforts—412

Balkans, Western. *See* Europe
BBC News—883
Belarus
Democracy efforts—762
U.S. national emergency, continuation—761–762

Belgium
Prime Minister—334, 360, 875–876
Relations with U.S.—360
Terrorist attacks in Brussels—325, 334–335, 338, 343, 360, 385, 390, 397, 401, 414, 495, 508, 510–511, 663, 876–878
Benin, President-elect—879
Blind or Severely Disabled, Committee for Purchase From People Who Are—872
Bloomberg Businessweek—894
Boy Scouts of America—871
Boys & Girls Clubs of America—888
Brazil
2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro—572
President—864
Relations with U.S.—339
U.S. Ambassador—891
Budget, Federal
See also specific Federal agency or organization
Amendments—422
Appropriations
Consolidated—83, 111
Emergency supplemental—163, 180
Deficit and national debt—25, 27, 67, 74, 111, 174, 266, 707, 739, 818
Fiscal year 2017 budget—105, 111, 155, 174, 422, 866
Government programs, spending reductions—174, 707
Infrastructure spending and investment—557, 560–562, 601, 839
Bulgaria, Ambassador to U.S.—898
Burkina Faso, U.S. Ambassador—895
Burma
Democracy efforts—141–142, 274, 341, 389, 606, 666, 879
Human rights issues—606, 667
President—389, 879
Relations with U.S.—389, 664, 879
U.S. national emergency, continuation—606
Burundi, U.S. Ambassador—889
Business and industry
See also Commerce, international; Employment and unemployment; *specific State or company*
Automobile industry, improvement—25, 51, 65, 68, 705, 719, 844
Business leaders, meeting with President—884
Consumer product safety, strengthening efforts—12
Consumer data security, strengthening efforts—188
Corporate inversions—418–420, 444, 558
Criminal record screening for job applications, restriction efforts—389
Business and industry—Continued
Entrepreneurship
International partnerships—315, 634–635, 641, 804, 810
Promotion efforts—29, 315, 802–803, 805, 808–810, 812
Foreign investment in U.S.—504–505
Global competitiveness—166, 457, 791
Global Entrepreneurship Summit—801–804, 809, 821, 897
Intellectual property law, strengthening efforts—749
Labor automation, effect on employment—706, 708
Manufacturing industry
Advanced manufacturing, promotion efforts—503, 705, 792
Improvement—27, 165, 719
Strengthening efforts—504, 843
Wage discrimination—81–82
Women-owned businesses—295
BuzzFeed News—888, 897

Cabinet. *See specific Federal department or executive branch agency*
California
2015 terrorist attack in San Bernardino—6, 86, 88, 92, 97, 161–162, 201, 207, 495, 508, 724, 732, 765, 772–773, 783, 786
Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands in Rancho Mirage—868
Castle Mountains National Monument—873
Cesar E. Chavez National Monument in Keene—753
Democratic Party events—129, 134, 137, 439, 441, 867, 880
Governor—158, 417, 445
KPIX in Oakland—864
Los Angeles
KABC—864
Shooting—892
W Los Angeles-West Beverly Hills hotel—867, 879
Majestic Yosemite Hotel in Yosemite—895–896
Minimum wage and paid sick leave legislation, passage—417
Moffett Federal Airfield in Mountain View—897
Mojave Trails National Monument—873
Paid family leave law, expansion—445
President's visits—129, 134, 137, 139–141, 439, 441, 801, 866–868, 879–880, 893, 895–897
San Francisco
InterContinental San Francisco hotel—880, 897
Twenty Five Lusk restaurant—897
Sand to Snow National Monument—873
Sheraton San Jose Hotel in Milpitas—867
Stanford University in Stanford—801–802, 813, 897
Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank—867
Yosemite National Park—787, 893, 896

Cameroon
Ambassador to U.S.—898
U.S. military detachment—769
Canada
Ambassador to U.S.—872–873, 898
Border with U.S., infrastructure and security—833
Carbon emissions, reduction efforts—239–240, 845, 854
Democratic Institutions, Minister of—856
Educational exchanges with U.S.—833
Environment and Climate Change, Minister of—873, 898
Foreign Affairs, Minister of—873
International Trade, Minister of—848–849, 898
National Defense, Minister of—873
Natural Resources, Minister of—241, 845
Oil supply and refining—854
Ottawa
National Gallery of Canada—898
Parliament Buildings—899
Sir John A. MacDonald Building—899
President Obama's visit—827, 830, 849, 886, 898–899
Prime Minister—226, 228, 238, 243, 528, 830, 844, 848–850, 854–856, 866, 871, 873, 894, 898
Relations with U.S.—226–227, 229–230, 234, 238, 244, 833, 835, 849–852, 856, 866
Security cooperation with U.S.—229, 853
Speaker of the House of Commons—849, 899
Tourism and commercial travel links with U.S.—850
Trade with U.S.—229, 237, 833–834, 848–850, 852
U.S. Ambassador—873
U.S. Embassy staff, meeting with President Obama—899
Cancer Advisory Board, National—895
Cancer Moonshot Task Force, White House—199, 865
Capital Planning Commission, National—860
CBS
CBS News—862
"CBS This Morning" program—866, 881
"Late Show With Stephen Colbert"—866
Central African Republic
Civil war and sectarian conflict—571
President—877
U.S. national emergency, continuation—571
Central America
See also Commerce, international; *specific country*
Migrants to U.S., influx—834, 886
Central Intelligence Agency—452, 454, 882, 895
Chad, U.S. Ambassador—882
Chamber of Commerce, U.S.—314
Channel NewsAsia—868
Chicago Tribune—867
Chile, U.S. Ambassador—887
China
Carbon emissions, reduction efforts—394–395, 488
Human rights issues—313, 393
Nuclear security, cooperation with U.S.—395–396, 401
President—392, 394–395, 413, 866, 877
Relations with U.S.—392–394, 661, 664
Trade and economic policies—169
Civil rights
African American faith and civil rights leaders, meeting with President—155
Civil Rights Act of 1964—487
Civil rights movement—97, 157, 192, 482, 486, 564, 602, 648, 740, 790, 869
Disabled persons, assistance and accommodation efforts—125–126
Female genital mutilation, prevention efforts—108, 225
Firearm rights—1–2, 4, 7, 10, 12, 22
Freedom of press—364, 366, 518, 531
Freedom of religion—9, 87–89, 96–97, 741, 773–774, 855
Freedom of speech—39
Hate crimes, prevention efforts—760, 823
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, equality—1, 27, 227, 258–259, 263, 266, 286, 328, 477, 490, 591, 606, 721, 728, 759–761, 765, 770, 784–785, 817, 823, 855
Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009—81, 295, 446
Minorities
Anti-Semitism—76–77, 549
Minority rights and ethnic tolerance—32, 77, 86–87, 89
Racial profiling—492
Relations with police—155
Privacy—112, 188, 196, 254–256, 383, 433
Racial equality—428, 435, 564–565, 567–569, 736, 789
Same-sex marriage—481, 487, 507, 736, 760–761
Voting Rights Act of 1965—434, 487
Wage equality—26, 81, 263–264, 295, 443, 445–447, 513, 710, 776–777, 819–820, 825, 855
Women's rights and gender equality—81, 225, 295–297, 328, 435, 446–447, 481, 572, 584, 590, 631, 645, 656, 682–683, 736, 775–778, 826, 855
Climate change. *See* Environment
CNN—9, 12, 884, 890
CNN en Español—873
College reporters, White House visit—517
Colombia
Counternarcotics efforts, cooperation with U.S.—100–101
Economic growth and development—101–102
Foreign Relations, Minister of—865
Interior, Minister of—865
International diplomatic efforts—308, 329, 483

Colombia—Continued
Political unrest and violence—101–102
President—100, 865
Reconciliation efforts—834, 853
Relations with U.S.—101
U.S. assistance—101, 230
U.S. Special Envoy for the Colombian Peace Process—100
Colorado
2012 shooting in Aurora—784
Colorado Springs
Colorado Springs Gazette—892
DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Colorado Springs—892
Falcon Stadium—892
Peterson Air Force Base—892
U.S. Air Force Academy—729–730, 735, 891
Governor—157, 729
KCNC in Denver—864
President's visit—729, 891–892
U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs—730
Commerce, Department of
Inspector General—883
Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National—701
Patent and Trademark Office, U.S.—573, 607
Secretary—152, 503, 790, 792, 898
SelectUSA trade and investment initiative—504, 790–792
Trade Administration, International—790
Commerce, international
See also specific country or region
Asia-Pacific, regional trade promotion efforts—140, 142, 150
Consumer protection standards—504
Cybersecurity and data protection, strengthening efforts—684
Environmental protection standards—93, 485, 497, 502, 504, 620, 631, 643, 647, 677, 711, 837, 852
Free and fair trade—93, 129, 165–166, 169, 188–189, 227, 229, 236, 497, 558, 589–590, 599, 620, 644, 674–675, 678, 707–708, 737, 790, 834, 836–837, 884, 887
Global financial markets
Stabilization efforts—126–127, 499, 512, 599, 662, 673, 676
Unrest—105
Group of Seven (G–7) nations—241, 420, 471, 476, 495, 500, 658, 662, 673–674, 677, 679, 682, 685–687, 696, 868, 891, 898
Group of Twenty (G–20) nations—239–240, 336, 393, 395, 420, 471, 476, 500, 677, 839, 847
Infrastructure investment, strengthening efforts—679
Intellectual property law, strengthening efforts—128, 393, 573–574, 583, 643, 750, 837
Commerce, international—Continued
Labor protection standards—93, 166, 485, 497, 502, 504, 620, 631, 647, 677, 711, 837, 852
North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)—166
U.S. exports
Expansion—140, 166, 708
Export control reforms—729
Trade imbalances—643
Commission. *See other part of subject*
Commodity Futures Trading Commission—872
Communications
See also specific news organization, State, or country
Broadband and wireless technologies—29, 252–253, 535, 537, 813
Cable and satellite television providers, service improvements—457
Extremist messaging on social media, efforts to counter—454
Internet neutrality—29, 93, 504
News media, Presidential interviews—141, 228, 304, 332, 407, 463, 493, 830, 860–864, 866–868, 870–871, 873–876, 879, 881, 883–885, 887–888, 890, 892–894, 896–898
Online harassment and cyberbullying—296
Communications Commission, Federal—457
Community Service, Corporation for National and—84
Congress
Bipartisanship—26, 32, 44, 48, 50, 83, 115–118, 121, 124, 138, 176, 188, 198, 290, 293, 301–302, 368, 388, 430, 439, 480, 554, 574, 782, 815, 864–865
Congressional Black Caucus—156
Congressional districts, revision process—119, 124, 138, 426, 523, 722
Congressional Friends of Ireland—279
Congressional Picnic—781
House of Representatives
House Democratic Caucus—78, 80
Majority leader—98
Minority leader—78, 94, 98, 132, 295, 297, 439–441, 443–444, 446, 759, 775, 821–822, 857, 863, 866, 880
Speaker—26, 28, 94, 112, 166, 180, 217, 278–281, 388, 441, 530, 560, 857, 864–865
Members, meetings with President—863, 865–866, 870–871, 893
Senate
Judiciary Committee—185, 869, 871
Majority leader—166, 173, 185–186, 279, 425, 430, 432, 518, 857, 864–865, 869, 871
Minority leader—186, 857, 863, 866, 869, 871
Presidential nominations, confirmation process—143–145, 185–186, 232, 277, 302, 424–426, 430, 432, 527
Procedural rule changes—425

Connecticut
2012 shooting in Newtown—1, 3, 5, 17, 22, 784
Governor—158
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau—223, 251
Corporation. *See other part of subject*
Côte d'Ivoire
Democracy efforts—94
U.S. national emergency, continuation—93–94
Crime. *See* Law enforcement and crime
Cuba
Agriculture, cooperation with U.S.—312, 321
Civil society leaders, meeting with President Obama—876
Communications technology, cooperation with U.S.—308, 312, 316
Democracy efforts—307
Economic growth and development—159, 314–315, 327
Educational exchanges with U.S.—308
Entrepreneurship, promotion efforts—314–316, 318–320, 324
Guantanamo Bay, U.S. Naval Base
Closure of detention facilities—32, 180–183, 273, 735
Detention of alleged terrorists—181–182, 769
Havana
Cathedral of the Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception—875
Chief of Mission's residence—876
Estadio Latinoamericano—876
Gran Teatro de la Habana Alicia Alonso—325, 876
La Cervecería restaurant—876
Meliá Habana hotel—875
Old Havana historical district—875
Palace of the Revolution—876
Revolution Square—876
Human rights issues—159, 307, 310, 312–313, 315, 329, 667
President—159, 304, 318, 324–326, 328–329, 344, 350, 366, 876
President Obama's visit—303–304, 306–307, 314–315, 325, 329–330, 869, 875–876
Relations with U.S.—31, 80, 159, 190, 230, 273, 303, 306–307, 309–310, 312–314, 324–327, 329, 344, 357, 735, 834, 852, 874
Trade with U.S.—308, 311–312, 326–327
U.S. Embassy staff, meeting with President Obama—303
U.S. national emergency, continuation and modification—190
U.S.-Cuba Business Council—314
Cybersecurity, Commission on Enhancing National—869, 880
Cyprus, Ambassador to U.S.—898
Deaths
Ali, Muhammad—740, 892–893
Butts, former Deputy White House Counsel Cassandra Q.—697, 753
Chavez, Helen Fabela—753
Cox, Jo—895–896
Howe, Gordie—761
Mansur, Akhtar Mohammad—620, 627
McClintock, Matthew—859
Medicine Crow, Joseph—417
Nelson, Prince R.—467, 477
Reagan, former First Lady Nancy Davis—222, 224, 264
Scalia, Antonin G., Supreme Court Associate Justice—139, 143, 868–869
Summitt, Patricia S. Head—826
Voinovich, former Sen. George V.—779
Decorations, medals, and awards
2015 Commander in Chief's Trophy—883
Medal of Honor—208, 865, 870, 896
Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers—886
Presidential Medal of Freedom—417, 827
Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor—603, 605, 888
Righteous Among the Nations Medal—74–75, 77
Science, National Medal of—607–609, 862–863, 888
Teachers of the Year, National and State—532–536, 884–885
Technology and Innovation, National Medal of—607–609, 862–863, 888
Defense and national security
See also Armed Forces, U.S.; Defense, Department of; Terrorism
Border security—797, 838, 855
Cybersecurity
Cyber attacks—112, 255, 383, 407, 466
Strengthening efforts—111–112, 151–152, 162, 223, 274, 393, 399, 412, 421, 511
Electronic surveillance program—255, 511
Hostage recovery policy—814–815
Intelligence—188, 454
National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016—72–73
Space defense capabilities, strengthening efforts—668
Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), deployment policy—436–437
Defense, Department of
See also Armed Forces, U.S.; Defense and national security; *specific military branch*
Assistant Secretaries
Homeland Defense—890
Manpower and Reserve Affairs—860
Readiness—890
Chattanooga, TN, military facilities, 2015 terrorist attack—88

Defense, Department of—Continued
Funding—111, 421–422
Joint Chiefs of Staff—199, 421, 435, 698, 771, 879
Leadership and combatant commanders, meeting with President—421
Secretary—181, 183, 199–200, 421, 698, 771, 859, 864, 873, 879, 882–883, 887–888, 898
Special Operations Command, U.S.—208
Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, MD—863
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board—885
Delaware
Disaster assistance—874
Governor—163, 175–176
Democratic Party
See also specific State
Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee—8, 439, 441, 821
Democratic National Committee—129, 134, 257, 262, 736, 738, 756, 880, 889
Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee—270, 867, 870, 880, 892–893
House Democratic Issues Conference—78
Denmark
Prime Minister—575, 578, 591, 886, 888
Relations with U.S.—581, 584, 587
Security cooperation with U.S.—581
Developing countries
See also Development banks and funds; *specific country or region*
Agricultural production, improvement efforts—348
Democratic governance and rule of law—674, 684, 853
Economic growth and development—653–654
Food security, strengthening efforts—274, 650, 696
Health and medical care, promotion efforts—674, 679, 681
International assistance—584–586, 695
Poverty—645, 852
Refugees—828
U.S. assistance—734
Development, U.S. Agency for International—272, 864
Disaster assistance
See also Natural disasters; *specific State, country, or executive branch agency*
Alabama—863
Alaska—869
Arkansas—866, 887
Delaware—874
District of Columbia—872
Georgia—871
Idaho—865
Iowa—882
Louisiana—866, 873
Marshall Islands—884
Disaster assistance—Continued
Maryland—872
Michigan—862
Mississippi—859, 877
Missouri—859, 863
Montana—890
Nebraska—882
New Jersey—874
Oklahoma—867
Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and Iowa—882
Oregon—869
Pennsylvania—877
Texas—866, 875, 884, 894
Virginia—872
Washington—862, 865
West Virginia—898
Diseases
See also HIV/AIDS
AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, Global Fund To Fight—681
Alzheimer's disease—265
Antibiotic-resistant bacteria—377
Asthma and respiratory illnesses—449
Cancer research, prevention, and treatment—29, 38, 45, 111, 169, 390, 448, 612
Ebola epidemic, domestic response and containment efforts—39, 610
Malaria, eradication efforts—274
Zika virus in Western Hemisphere, containment and prevention efforts—162, 180, 197, 230, 308, 322, 334, 347, 599, 609–611, 680, 711, 762, 834, 852, 863–864
District of Columbia
Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument—445–447, 880
BLT Steak restaurant—868
Cafe Milano—894
Democratic Party events—870, 889
Disaster assistance—872
Fiscal year 2016 budget request—85
Howard University—563, 566, 569–570, 886–887
Jefferson, Washington, DC hotel—870, 889
Leckie Elementary School—862
Mayor—826
Minimum wage legislation, passage—826
Oyamel Cocina Mexicana restaurant—862
Public Defender Service—422
Shooting outside White House—889
Sidwell Friends School—893
Walter E. Washington Convention Center—879
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro)—561
Djibouti, security cooperation with U.S.—769
Dominican Republic, extradition treaty with U.S.—127

Drug abuse and trafficking
See also specific country or region
Addiction treatment and reduction efforts—26, 72, 172–173, 197, 368–369, 371–375, 378, 380–382, 431, 595, 711, 828, 834
Decriminalization and legalization—430
Education and prevention efforts—173, 376, 595–596
Foreign narcotics traffickers—308, 834
Interdiction efforts—368, 371

Easter Prayer Breakfast—384
Economic Co-operation and Development, Organisation for—677–678
Economy, international. *See* Commerce, international
Economy, national
See also Budget, Federal; Employment and unemployment; *specific State*
American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009—204–205
Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act—222, 224, 880
Economic concerns—27, 36, 56, 67, 106, 132, 135, 137, 204, 270, 431, 565, 704–705, 716–717, 725, 880
Financial regulations, strengthening efforts—222–224, 252, 259, 519, 712, 819, 844
Household income and wages—104, 557, 601, 706, 710, 739, 818–819
Improvement—27, 36, 42, 55, 66, 78, 104–106, 111, 115, 130, 134, 137, 203, 206, 258, 263, 266, 270, 557, 662, 704–705, 715, 718, 730, 737, 739, 776
Income inequality—263, 601, 706, 708, 739, 776, 818, 822
Poverty—28, 45
Strengthening efforts—25, 56, 79, 106–107, 111, 204, 220, 268, 444, 519, 562, 601, 713–714, 717, 739, 819
Ecuador
Earthquake, damage and recovery efforts—882
President—882
U.S. assistance—882
Education
See also specific State
Early childhood education programs—27, 36, 51, 67, 158, 264, 443, 485, 490, 534, 537, 560, 601, 710, 817
Every Student Succeeds Act—27, 535
Foreign exchange programs—308, 614, 630, 642, 646, 752, 833
Global competitiveness—72, 83, 130, 355, 441, 536, 819
Government and private sector, coordination efforts—84, 253
High school dropout rate and prevention programs—536
High school graduation rate—27, 36, 67, 203, 270, 534, 536, 553, 705, 790, 817
Education—Continued
Hispanic students, performance and completion, improvement efforts—553
Minority students—537, 565
Postsecondary education
Affirmative action programs—797
Affordability—25, 27, 52, 54, 130, 443–444, 517, 519, 521–522, 716, 720–721, 837, 843
College opportunity, expansion efforts—52, 54
Community colleges—28, 36, 52, 67, 521–522, 536–537, 710, 719–720
Graduation rate—553
Historically Black Colleges and Universities—54
Pell grants—517, 720
Student loans, elimination of subsidies to private providers—720
Student loans, repayment options—28, 517
Reform efforts—536
Science and math programs—26–27, 36, 67, 158, 450–451, 535, 607, 683, 720, 777, 872
Standards and school accountability—25, 51, 535, 537
Teachers—36, 67, 532–537
Technology and innovation, expansion efforts—83, 252, 256, 450, 522, 535, 537, 710
Vocational and technical education programs—67, 720
Education, Department of
Assistant Secretaries
Communications and Outreach—880
Elementary and Secondary Education—880
Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development—880
Funding—422
Historically Black Colleges and Universities, President's Board of Advisers on—886
Race to the Top Fund—535
Secretary—277, 533, 759, 867
"Teach To Lead" initiative—536
Educational Excellence for Hispanics, President's Advisory Commission on—880
Egypt
Crash of EgyptAir Flight 804 off coast of Greece—889
U.S. military detachment—769
El Salvador, Ambassador to U.S.—898
Election Assistance Commission—885
Elections
See also specific State or country
2016 Presidential and congressional elections—78, 133, 135–137, 147–149, 203, 235, 259, 262, 264, 266, 271, 280, 329, 353–354, 363, 431, 439–440, 443, 473, 497, 530, 559–562, 664–665, 704, 706, 717, 722–723, 736–737, 757, 799, 822, 839, 855, 892–893
Campaign finance laws—33, 119, 138, 523

Elections—Continued
Election Administration, President's Commission on—120
Voter participation—33, 40, 120–121, 124, 138, 158, 248, 250, 261, 264, 269, 434, 524, 551–553, 567–568, 601, 713, 723, 728, 820, 897
Emergency Management Agency, Federal. *See* Homeland Security, Department of
Employment and unemployment
See also Economy, national; *specific State*
Job creation and growth—1, 25, 27, 36, 42, 55, 65, 67, 79, 104, 109, 158, 203, 216, 219–220, 223, 275, 418, 444, 503, 557, 589–590, 705, 707, 739, 790, 816
Job training and assistance programs—28, 37, 68, 107, 705, 719, 811
Unemployment insurance—28, 37, 68
Unemployment rate—27, 36, 42, 65, 67, 104–105, 107, 158, 216, 220, 331, 418, 556–557, 705, 709, 818
Wage insurance—28, 37, 56, 68
Energy
See also Environment; *specific State or country*
Alternative and renewable sources and technologies
Promotion efforts—25, 27, 29, 105, 107, 109, 131, 205, 238, 241, 334, 449, 586–588, 650, 705, 719, 737, 747, 804, 834, 839, 844–845, 854
U.S. production—38, 79, 168, 204–205, 270, 834
Carbon dioxide emissions, reduction—131, 239–240, 263, 341, 394–395, 488, 789, 846, 854
Coal and clean coal technologies—168
Developing countries, energy sources—239–240, 649, 693
Domestic sources—1, 107, 130, 168–169, 177, 258, 266, 334, 791, 842
Energy efficiency and weatherization, homes and buildings—71, 241
Foreign sources—205, 258, 266, 705
Fuel efficiency standards, strengthening efforts—47, 68, 241, 845–846
Gasoline, oil, and natural gas costs—29, 67, 107, 818, 842
Greenhouse gas emissions, regulation—47, 131, 169, 230, 239–241, 587, 845–847, 854
Hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles, battery technology, U.S. production—205
Infrastructure and grid improvements—205, 241, 842
National energy policy—29
Oil and gas industry subsidies—241, 588
Solar and wind energy—29, 47, 109, 168, 205, 258, 260, 263, 266, 268, 587, 747, 843, 897
Strategic Petroleum Reserve—423
Energy, Department of
Funding—423
Inspector General—881
Nuclear Security Administration, National—879
Secretary—169, 241, 607, 845
England. *See* United Kingdom
Environment
See also Energy
Carbon emissions—29, 109, 205, 585–586, 588
Climate change—1, 29, 38, 47, 71, 109, 131, 135, 167, 205, 227, 229, 234, 238, 242, 258, 260, 266, 270, 273, 308, 334, 336, 341, 346, 390, 394–395, 440–441, 443, 481, 488, 507, 579, 585–586, 588–589, 600, 645, 649, 679, 682, 692, 701, 735, 746, 788–789, 820, 822, 828, 844, 847, 853, 891, 895
Conservation
Fishery stocks, management efforts—242
International promotion efforts—588
Promotion efforts—588, 649–650, 788–789, 846
Wildlife preservation, strengthening efforts—626, 747
Paris Agreement—31, 39, 47, 109, 131, 141–142, 168–169, 227, 230, 238–240, 263, 272–273, 334, 390, 393–395, 397, 470, 488, 495, 499, 510, 579, 585–587, 590, 616, 626, 633, 658, 673–674, 692, 744, 746, 788, 828, 834, 844, 847, 887
Quality and improvement efforts—46
Toxic chemicals and pollutants, regulation—795–796
Water management policy, improvement efforts—63, 71, 651
Environmental Protection Agency—63, 131, 239, 539–540, 542, 796
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission—81
ESPN—874, 876, 897
Europe
See also specific country
Baltic States, security cooperation with U.S.—496, 581
Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.—403
Defense relationship with U.S.—85
Energy sources, diversification efforts—505, 579, 585
European Union
Eastern Partnership—582
Relations with U.S.—898
Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T–TIP)—110, 472, 485, 495, 497, 502, 504–505, 579, 590, 662, 678, 884
United Kingdom, membership status—470–471, 474, 476, 675, 802, 814, 822, 836, 839–840, 851–852, 884, 897–898
Financial markets
Improvement—662
Stabilization efforts—512, 871
Middle Eastern and North African refugees, humanitarian situation—110, 397, 414, 470, 472–473, 481, 496, 502, 579, 585, 856, 863, 865, 870–871, 884
Nordic States
Relations with U.S.—575–576, 578, 581–585, 591–592
Security cooperation with U.S.—581, 584

Europe—Continued
Security and Co-operation in Europe, Organization for—581, 868, 870, 874
Trade with U.S.—497, 503–504, 506
Western Balkans, U.S. national emergency, continuation—794
European Investment Bank—686
"Every Kid in a Park" initiative, White House—895
Evidence-Based Policymaking, Commission on—889, 897
Export-Import Bank, U.S.—83, 746, 759, 860

Facebook, Inc.—807, 810, 861, 893, 897
Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, President's Advisory Council on—864, 887
FBI. *See* Justice, Department of
Federal. *See other part of subject*
FEMA. *See* Homeland Security, Department of
Finland
President—575, 578, 591, 886, 888
Relations with U.S.—581, 584
Florida
Democratic Party events—736, 892
Floridian National Golf Club in Palm City—892
Orlando
Amway Center—895
Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts—895
Invictus Games—886–887
Terrorist attack—763–766, 770, 772–774, 781, 783–786, 813, 819, 822–823, 850, 894–895, 897
President's visits—202, 736, 783, 870–871, 892, 894–895
Saft America, Inc., advanced batteries plant in Jacksonville—202–206, 871
Foreign policy, U.S.
See also specific country or region
Antipersonnel landmines, elimination efforts—101, 230, 583, 834, 853
Civil and human rights, promotion efforts—108, 142, 150, 270, 339, 513, 666–667, 824, 855
Democratization—31
Diplomatic efforts, expansion—272, 275, 339–340, 441, 599
Foreign Ambassadors, credentialing ceremony—864, 871
Global Health Security Agenda—143, 334, 584, 626, 680
Humanitarian assistance programs—590, 793
Poverty, efforts to combat—348–350
Trafficking in persons, efforts to combat—143, 485, 511, 585, 654, 790
Fox News, "Fox News Sunday" program—879
France
2015 terrorist attacks in Paris—86, 397, 401, 403, 495, 508, 510–511, 663, 875
France—Continued
Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.—769
President—397, 496, 500, 510–511, 870, 875, 884, 894
Relations with U.S.—397
Terrorist attack in Magnanville—894
Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act—896

Georgia
Criminal justice reform legislation, passage—517
Disaster assistance—871
Governor—517
National Prescription Drug Abuse and Heroin Summit in Atlanta—367
President's visit—367, 877–878
Germany
Business leaders, meeting with President Obama—884
Chancellor—493, 503–506, 509–511, 514, 530, 802, 840, 863, 870, 884, 898
Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.—495
Hannover
Hannover Congress Centrum—884
Hannover Messe Trade Fair—495, 503, 505–506, 884
Mayor—507
Schloss Herrenhausen—884
Seefugium hotel—884
Hostage incident in Viernheim—897
Lower Saxony, Prime Minister—507
President Obama's visit—493, 495, 503, 505–506, 874, 882, 884
Relations with U.S.—495–496, 499, 507, 898
Terrorist attack in Istanbul, Turkey, death of German tourists—863
Trade with U.S.—495, 503
Google Inc.—897
Government organization and employees
See also Budget, Federal; *specific agency or organization*
Accountability and transparency, strengthening efforts—856
Criminal record screening for job applications, restriction efforts—388, 480
Federal information technology system, modernization efforts—111–112, 151–152, 249
Federal programs, improvement efforts—48, 221, 247, 249, 251
Federal regulations, review—170–171, 718
Government data and information, access and format improvements—48
Governors Association, Democratic—157
Governors Association, National—160–161, 163–164, 167, 170

Great Britain. *See* United Kingdom
Great Lakes Fishery Commission—892
Greece
  Ambassador to U.S.—898
  Crash of EgyptAir Flight 804—889
  Public debt, restructuring assistance—662
  Syrian refugees, humanitarian situation—514
Guantanamo Bay, U.S. Naval Base. *See* Cuba
Guatemala
  Ambassador to U.S.—898
  President-elect—861

Hawaii
  Crash of U.S. Marine Corps CH–53E helicopters off Oahu coast—73
  President's visit—859
  U.S. Representative, retirement—612
Health and Human Services, Department of
  Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—539, 609–611, 727, 863
  Food and Drug Administration—198
  National Institutes of Health—29, 193, 198, 449, 609–611, 863
  Preparedness and Response, Assistant Secretary for—64, 540
  Secretary—171–173, 276, 540, 542, 609, 863–864
Health and medical care
  See also Diseases; HIV/AIDS; Science and technology
  Abortion—25
  Affordability and costs—24, 111, 174, 216–217, 331, 707, 716, 724
  Community health centers—381–382
  Contraception and family planning—73, 728, 775
  Cost control reforms—25, 28, 175, 197, 258
  Employer-based health insurance coverage—25, 216, 718
  Health insurance exchanges—74, 248, 707, 718
  Health insurance, protection of coverage—216
  Health insurance reforms—27, 36, 56, 68, 73, 130, 158, 174, 216–217, 227, 328, 331, 348, 707, 711, 723, 818
  Hospitals, patient visitor policy—760
  Information technology—193, 196, 248
  Insurance coverage and access to providers—1, 25, 28, 67, 71, 73–74, 104, 115, 130, 135, 173, 197, 203, 215–218, 258, 263, 266, 270, 331, 341, 371, 381–382, 444, 486, 519, 551, 560, 595, 705, 707, 739, 741, 776, 790, 864
  Lead poisoning, reduction efforts—539, 541, 543, 545–547
  Medicare and Medicaid—25, 28, 42, 68, 175, 217–218, 258, 260, 268, 331, 374, 380, 382, 539, 545, 547, 711, 816
Health and medical care—Continued
  Mental health programs and services—6, 23, 173, 374
  Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act—24–25, 28, 175, 214–218, 266, 295, 331, 373–374, 382, 432, 736, 872
  Precision medicine, strengthening efforts—192–195, 198, 247, 265, 270
  Prescription narcotic access and availability, training for health care professionals—376–377, 379
  Preventive care and public health programs—348
  Research and development—26, 49, 196, 198, 265, 322, 728, 863
  Seniors, prescription drug benefits—217
  Women's health issues—73, 263–265, 268, 270, 295, 826
Historically Black Colleges and Universities, President's Board of Advisers on—891
HIV/AIDS
  See also specific country or region
  Domestic prevention and treatment strategy—740–741, 760
  International prevention and treatment efforts—32, 274, 681, 741, 852
  President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)—238
Holidays and special observances
  African American History Month—156
  American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, seventh anniversary—202
  Armenian Remembrance Day—478
  Ash Wednesday—125
  Black History Month—155, 869
  Cinco de Mayo—553
  Earth Day—470, 488
  Easter—125, 360–362, 384–385, 877–878
  Equal Pay Day, National—445
  Father's Day—786–787
  Greek Independence Day—879
  Holocaust Remembrance Day—549
  Homophobia and Transphobia, International Day Against—605
  International Jazz Day—525–527
  Juneteenth—789
  Lent—125
  Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month—759
  Martin Luther King, Jr., Day—862
  Memorial Day—697–698, 891
  Mother's Day—562–563
  Nowruz—875
  Orthodox Christmas—8
  Orthodox Easter—525
  Passover—479, 884
  Police Week—603
  Ramadan—741–742

Holidays and special observances—Continued
St. Patrick's Day—281, 284–285, 287
Teacher Appreciation Day, National—536
Torture, International Day in Support of Victims of—824
Vesak—611
Women's Day, International—224
Women's History Month—295–296, 874
World Refugee Day—793
Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting Day, International—108
Holocaust Memorial Council, U.S.—860, 881, 892
Holy See (Vatican City)
Ambassador to U.S.—898
Pope—32, 77, 96, 306, 343, 358, 386, 479, 514
Homeland Security, Department of
See also Defense and national security; Terrorism
Customs and Border Protection, U.S.—189
Emergency Management Agency, Federal—163, 519, 538, 701–702
Funding—422
Public Affairs, Assistant Secretary for—872
Secretary—152, 191, 759, 771, 800, 894, 898
Transportation Security Administration—492
Housing
Foreclosure rates—705
Rental housing, expansion and improvement efforts—72
Humanities, National Council on the—885, 899
Hungary
Relations with U.S.—76
Social security agreement with U.S.—84
Hurricanes. *See* Disaster assistance; Natural disasters; *specific Federal agency or State*

Iceland
Prime Minister—575, 578, 591, 886, 888
Relations with U.S.—581
Idaho, disaster assistance—865
Illinois
Governor—113
President's visits—113, 123, 125, 138, 423, 864, 866–867, 879
Springfield
Feed Store restaurant—867
Hoogland Center for the Arts—867
Illinois General Assembly—113–115, 138
University of Chicago Law School in Chicago—423–424, 879
Immigration and naturalization
See also Defense and national security; *specific country or region*
American—478, 550–551, 554, 597, 797, 799, 838
Central American migrants, influx—886
Citizenship—520, 551, 554
Immigration and naturalization—Continued
Illegal immigration—520, 708, 797
Reform—26, 148, 440, 443, 520, 551, 553, 560, 708, 736, 797–800, 819, 838, 881
Refugees—96, 521, 742, 793, 855–856
Visa policy, U.S.—624
India
Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.—750
Cybersecurity efforts, cooperation with U.S.—749
Educational exchanges with U.S.—752
Nuclear energy, cooperation with U.S.—746
Prime Minister—488, 744, 746–748, 751–752, 889, 893
Relations with U.S.—744–746
Science and technology, cooperation with U.S.—748, 751
Security cooperation with U.S.—744, 747–749
Tourism and commercial travel links with U.S.—750, 752
Trade with U.S.—750
Indian Education, National Advisory Council on—869
Indiana
Concord Community High School in Elkhart—892
Governor—711
President's visit—704, 714, 891–892
Indonesia, terrorist attack in Jakarta—61, 141
Infrastructure Advisory Council, National—870, 882, 889
Intellectual Disabilities, President's Committee for People With—888, 892, 897
Intelligence. *See* Defense and national security; *specific Federal agency*
Intelligence, Office of the Director of National—408
Interior, Department of the
Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument, establishment—445–447
Castle Mountains National Monument, establishment—873
Mojave Trails National Monument, establishment—873
Park Service, National—445, 787, 896
Public lands, conservation and management—787–788
Sand to Snow National Monument, establishment—873
Secretary—160, 168, 445
Stonewall National Monument, establishment—823
Internal Revenue Service Oversight Board—887
International. *See other part of subject*
Investment Disputes, Panel of Arbitrators of the International Centre for the Settlement of—867
Iowa
Disaster assistance—882
Governor—160
KCCI in Des Moines—885

Iran
Captured U.S. sailors, release—59
Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010—55
Detained U.S. citizens, release—59–60
Financial settlement with U.S.—59
Human rights issues—399
International and U.S. sanctions—56–57, 59–60, 226
International diplomatic efforts—58, 60, 460
Iraq, role—464
Nuclear program, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action—31, 38, 56–58, 60, 79, 83, 130, 225, 272–273, 341, 399–400, 409, 419, 460, 462, 464, 466–467, 470, 484, 486, 500, 510, 584, 663, 688, 735
President—59
Regional involvement—882–883
Syria, role—201, 687
Terrorism, sponsorship—399
U.S. national emergency, continuation—225–226
U.S. sanctions—57
Iraq
Al Qaida in Iraq (AQI) terrorist organization—437
Counterterrorism efforts—859
Economic growth and development—859
Iraqi military and security forces—200, 422, 453, 495, 768
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization—699–700
Political unrest and violence—184, 199, 461, 464–465, 658, 731, 772, 882–883
Prime Minister—464–465, 859, 889
Reconciliation efforts—688
Relations with Kuwait—465
Relations with Turkey—860
Relations with U.S.—465
Security cooperation with U.S.—207, 306, 337, 360, 397, 403, 414, 421, 453, 465, 734, 768, 771, 773, 828, 862, 889
Terrorist attacks in Baghdad—890
U.S. Ambassador—889
U.S. and coalition forces, withdrawal—115, 130
U.S. assistance—459
U.S. military forces, casualties—306, 437, 886
U.S. national emergency, continuation—607
Ireland
Ambassador to U.S.—285–286
Prime Minister—278–281, 285–288, 873
Relations with U.S.—278, 280, 286
Trade with U.S.—278
U.S. Ambassador—285
Ireland, Northern. *See* United Kingdom
Israel
See also Middle East
Ambassador to U.S.—75–76
President—76
Israel—Continued
Prime Minister—352, 355
Relations with Turkey—899
Security cooperation with U.S.—75
Trade with U.S.—190
Italy
Ambassador to U.S.—872
Defense relationship with U.S.—871
President—109, 864, 866
Prime Minister—496, 510, 870, 884
Relations with U.S.—109–110

Japan
Alleged rape and murder of Japanese woman by former U.S. servicemember in Okinawa—658, 660
Defense relationship with U.S.—658, 660, 668–669, 671, 866
Foreign Affairs, Deputy Minister for—668
Hiroshima
Hiroshima Peace Memorial—663, 670–671, 891
Hiroshima Prefectural Confederation of A-bomb Sufferers Organization—891
U.S. prisoners-of-war memorial—891
Ise Jingu Shrine in Ise—891
Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Iwakuni—668–669
Nuclear material, safe disposal, cooperation with U.S.—407
Nuclear power plants in Fukushima—694
Nuclear security, cooperation with U.S.—404
President Obama's visit—657, 662, 668, 670, 887, 890–891
Prime Minister—390, 404, 657, 662, 670, 860, 866, 878, 891
Relations with South Korea—391, 860
Relations with U.S.—390, 411, 669, 671
Shima Kanko Hotel, The Classic, in Shima City—890–891
U.S. Ambassador—285
Yokota Air Force Base—890
Jordan
Ambassador to U.S.—898
King—184, 861, 866
Relations with U.S.—184
Security cooperation with U.S.—184, 769
Syrian refugees, humanitarian situation—184
U.S. assistance—184
J Street—881
Judiciary
Federal court nominations and confirmations—424, 427, 432, 434–435, 801, 861, 864–865, 867, 871, 874–875, 879, 881, 885, 889, 899
Sentencing Commission, U.S.—874

Judiciary—Continued
Supreme Court
Associate Justice—139, 143–145, 185–186, 232, 235, 263, 289–290, 427, 430, 754, 775, 868–872
Associate Justice-designate—290, 300, 302–303, 424–428, 430, 432, 434–435, 439, 442, 517, 527, 529, 601, 798, 819, 822
Chief Justice—145, 292, 428, 442
Roe v. *Wade* decision, 43d anniversary—73
United States v. *Texas*—881
Whole Woman's Health v. *Hellerstedt* decision—826
Justice, Department of
Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Bureau of—2, 6, 16, 20, 772
Attorney General—1–2, 16, 155, 172, 603–604, 893
Bureau of Investigation, Federal—2, 6, 16, 91, 155, 603, 763–766, 770–771, 814, 894
Deputy Attorney General—764, 766, 894
Drug Enforcement Administration—371
Marshals Service, U.S.—865
Solicitor General, U.S.—736, 826, 881
U.S. attorneys—889
J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board—891

Kansas, shootings in Newton and Hesston—202, 871
Kazakhstan
Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, U.S.-Kazakhstan Treaty on—301
Nuclear security, cooperation with U.S.—398–399
President—398
Kennedy Center. *See* Smithsonian Institution
Kentucky, Governor—173
Kenya
East African refugees, humanitarian situation—897
President—897
Relations with U.S.—897
Kosovo, KFOR international security force—770
Kuwait
Amir—883
Relations with Iraq—465
U.S. Ambassador—881

Labor, Department of
Financial advisers, conflict of interest regulations—756
Public Affairs, Assistant Secretary for—877
Retirement savings advice, regulation—444
Secretary—81
Labor issues
Minimum wage—26, 71, 79, 82, 158, 213, 263–264, 416–417, 443, 558, 560, 601, 710, 737, 776–777, 826, 843
Overtime pay regulations, modernization efforts—612, 710, 777
Labor issues—Continued
Paid family and sick leave—26, 71, 79, 82, 158, 225, 260, 264, 295, 416–417, 443, 445, 560, 776, 819
Unions
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW)—64, 69
Labor movement and organized labor—166, 263, 710
United Farm Workers—753
Labor Relations Board, National—885
Laos
President—140–141
U.S. Ambassador—889
Law enforcement and crime
21st-Century Policing, President's Task Force on—71, 155–156, 569, 604
Commutations and pardons—387–388, 429
Crime rate—13, 430
Criminal justice system, reform efforts—26, 44, 50, 72, 155–156, 176, 264, 387–388, 430, 479–480, 488, 517, 552, 567, 604, 865, 881
Fraternal Order of Police—603
Gun control—2, 4–6, 11–12, 14–15, 19–20, 22, 724, 727, 765–766, 784, 819, 822
Gun violence, prevention efforts—1–7, 9, 11, 15, 17–19, 23, 26, 72, 162, 203, 727, 764–766, 772, 784, 786, 859–860
Illegal immigration, deportation of criminals—800
Incarceration rate and prison population—565
Law enforcement officers, service and dedication—603–605
Muslim American community, cooperation efforts—91
Pardons and commutations—878
Parole and ex-convict reintegration programs, improvement efforts—49–50, 387, 430, 480
Sentencing requirements, reform—50, 388, 430, 480
Sexual assault—777
Trade secrets theft, efforts to combat—573–574, 583
Lebanon
Hizballah political-paramilitary organization—409, 462
Political unrest and violence—882
Syria, role—538
U.S. Ambassador—867
Legislation, enacted
Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program Reauthorization Act of 2015—605
Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016—26
Defend Trade Secrets Act of 2016—573–574
Fallen Heroes Flag Act of 2016—605
FOIA Improvement Act of 2016—856–857

Legislation, enacted—Continued
Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act—795–796
Judicial Redress Act of 2015—188
Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act—856–857
Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015—169, 188–190
Legislation, proposed
Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act—762–763, 847
Restoring Americans' Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act of 2015—24–25
Liberia, U.S. Ambassador—867
Library of Congress—870
Libya
2012 attack on U.S. mission in Benghazi—31
Democracy efforts—470, 474, 495, 501, 689, 884
Human rights issues—458
International diplomatic efforts—179
NATO, role—414
Political unrest and violence—110, 147, 179, 201, 273, 397, 458, 460–461, 464, 726, 734, 865, 882–883
Reconciliation efforts—772
United Nations, role—464
U.N. Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)—689
U.S. national emergency, continuation—179
U.S. sanctions—458
Lithuania, U.S. Ambassador—875
Louisiana
Baton Rouge
Holiday Inn Baton Rouge hotel—861
McKinley Senior High School—41, 861
Poor Boy Lloyd's restaurant—861
Disaster assistance—866, 873
Governor—41, 54
President's visit—41–42, 860–861

Macedonia, political unrest and violence—794
Malaria. *See* Diseases
Malaysia
Prime Minister—654
U.S. Ambassador—895
Malta, Ambassador to U.S.—872
Management and Budget, Office of—170–171, 423
March of Dimes—899
Maritime Commission, Federal—890, 893
Marshall Islands, disaster assistance—884
Maryland
Catonsville
Al-Rahmah School—865
Islamic Society of Baltimore—86, 865
Disaster assistance—872
Governor—170
Joint Base Andrews—555, 861, 886, 889
Maryland—Continued
President's visits—78, 86, 555, 861, 863–865, 886, 889, 896
U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis—515–516, 883
Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda—863, 896
Massachusetts
2013 Boston Marathon bombing in Boston—88, 92, 340, 454, 732
Governor—172
Mauritania, Ambassador to U.S.—898
Mayors, U.S. Conference of—71–72
Medal of Valor Review Board—872
Medals. *See* Decorations, medals, and awards
Medicare and Medicaid. *See* Health and medical care
Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Task Force—371, 374
Merchant Marine Academy, U.S.—882
Mexico
Ambassador to U.S.—898
Border with U.S., infrastructure and security—833
Canada's Ambassador to Mexico—898
Carbon emissions, reduction efforts—845
Central American migrants, influx—886
Counternarcotics and drug interdiction efforts—861
Counternarcotics efforts, cooperation with U.S.—371, 828
Economy, Secretary of—898
Educational exchanges with U.S.—833
Energy, Secretary of—845
Environment and Natural Resources, Secretary of—898
Finance and Public Credit, Secretary of—898
Foreign Relations, Secretary of—898
President—553, 827, 830, 844, 861, 886, 898
Reform efforts—886
Relations with U.S.—828–829, 833, 835, 838, 861
Tourism and commercial travel links with U.S.—828
Trade with U.S.—828, 833–834
Michigan
Detroit
Jolly Pumpkin Pizzeria and Brewery—862
North American International Auto Show at Cobo Center—862
Shinola flagship store—862
UAW–GM Center for Human Resources—862
Disaster assistance—64, 862
Flint
Contaminated tap water—64, 71, 96, 519, 538–546, 548, 862
Northwestern High School—886
Governor—538–541, 545, 547, 862
President's visits—63–64, 66, 538, 541, 862, 884–886
Shootings in Kalamazoo—162, 202

Middle East
See also Palestinian Authority and Palestinians; *specific country*
Arab-Israeli conflict, peace process—70, 184, 342, 351–352, 355, 462, 582, 690, 882
Democracy efforts—30
Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—453, 459–466, 882–883
Human rights issues—460
Terrorists who threaten to disrupt the peace process, U.S. national emergency, continuation—70
Minnesota, Governor—158, 169
Mississippi, disaster assistance—859, 877
Missouri
2014 civil unrest in Ferguson—487
Disaster assistance—859, 863
WDAF in Kansas City—885
Monetary Fund, International—83, 472, 509
Montana, disaster assistance—890
Montenegro, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, accession bid—827

NAFTA. *See* Commerce, international
National Geographic—896
National. *See other part of subject*
National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee, President's—882
National security. *See* Defense and national security
NATO. *See* North Atlantic Treaty Organization
Natural disasters
See also Disaster assistance; *specific State or country*
Haiti, earthquake—96
Preparedness efforts—701–702
Navy, Department of the
Chief of Naval Operations—515
Secretary—515
U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD—515–516, 883
NBC
NBC News—881
"The Ellen DeGeneres Show"—867
"The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon"—893
"Today" program—860
Nebraska
Disaster assistance—882
Lieutenant Governor—34
President's visit—34–35, 860–861
University of Nebraska Omaha in Omaha—34
Netherlands, Prime Minister—400
New Hampshire
Governor—172
WMUR in Manchester—885
New Jersey
Daily Targum newspaper of Rutgers University—887
Disaster assistance—874
New Jersey—Continued
Lieutenant Governor—596
President's visit—596, 887–888
Rutgers University–New Brunswick in New Brunswick—596–597, 602, 888
New Mexico
Carlsbad Caverns National Park—787, 893, 895–896
President's visit—893, 895
New York
Democratic Party events—756, 893
Governor—416
Minimum wage and paid family leave legislation, passage—416
New York City
NBC Studios at Rockefeller Center—893
Stonewall National Monument—823
President's visit—756, 893
U.S. Representative, retirement—8
New York Times—885
NHK News—888
Niger
President—878
U.S. military detachment—769
Nigeria
Boko Haram terrorist organization—484, 778
U.S. Ambassador—899
Nordic Leaders Summit, U.S.-—581, 875, 886
North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD)—850
North American Leaders' Summit—833, 898
North Atlantic Treaty Organization—85, 110, 226, 229, 273, 411, 414, 421, 470–472, 476, 481, 495–497, 500, 509–511, 579, 581–582, 768, 770, 802, 814, 827–828, 850, 853, 870, 877, 898
North Carolina, 2015 shooting in Chapel Hill—92
North Korea
Ballistic missile test launch—866
China, role—500
Huma rights issues—390
International and U.S. sanctions—213, 273, 298–299, 390, 393, 500
International diplomatic efforts—689, 861, 866
Nuclear weapons development—213, 298–299, 342, 390, 393, 408, 413, 500, 658, 663, 688, 731, 794, 859–861, 866
Six-party talks—501
Supreme Commander—500, 663
U.S. national emergency, continuation—793–794
U.S. sanctions—298–299
Northern Ireland. *See* United Kingdom
Norway
Nuclear energy cooperation with U.S.—780–781
Prime Minister—575, 578, 591, 886, 888
Relations with U.S.—581, 584
Security cooperation with U.S.—581

NPR—875, 898
Nuclear energy. *See* Energy; *specific country*
Nuclear weapons. *See* Arms and munitions; *specific country*

Office. *See other part of subject*
Ohio
  U.S. Senator, death—779
  WKRC in Cincinnati—885
Oklahoma
  1995 bombing in Oklahoma City—428, 442
  Disaster assistance—867
Olympic games. *See* Sports; *specific country*
Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and Iowa, disaster assistance—882
Oregon
  Disaster assistance—869
  Governor—158, 213
  Minimum wage legislation, passage—213
Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC)—860, 872

Pakistan
  Counterterrorism cooperation with the U.S.—878
  Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), suspected terrorist safe havens—627, 773
  Prime Minister—878
  Terrorist attack in Lahore—878
Palestinian Authority and Palestinians
  See also Middle East
  President—355
Panama, Panama Canal expansion project—896
Paris Agreement. *See* Environment
Park Service, National. *See* Interior, Department of the
Parole Commission, U.S.—875, 887
PBS
  "Charlie Rose" program—884
  "NewsHour" program—714, 722
  "The Week" program—881
Peace Corps, U.S.—614, 624, 631, 635, 641, 646
Pennsylvania
  Disaster assistance—877
  WCAU in Philadelphia—864
Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation—877, 886, 893
PEPFAR. *See* HIV/AIDS
Peru
  Election—896
  President-elect—896
  Relations with U.S.—896
Philippines
  Abu Sayyaf terrorist organization—894
  Election—888
  President-elect—888
  Relations with U.S.—888
  U.S. Ambassador—889
Planned Parenthood—25
Players' Tribune—893
Poland, President Obama's visit—893
Politico, "Off Message" podcast—863
Postal Regulatory Commission—895
Postal Service, U.S.—875
Prayer Breakfast, National—94, 96
Presidency, U.S., State of the Union Address—26, 34, 42–45, 48, 50, 55, 861
President. *See other part of subject*
Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board—383, 875
Privacy Council, Federal—188
Public Diplomacy, U.S. Advisory Commission on—875
Public Interest Declassification Board—897
Puerto Rico, public debt, restructuring assistance—79, 762–763, 847, 857

Qatar
  Amir—883
  Counterterrorism efforts—883

Railroad Retirement Board—897
Reconnaissance Office, National—881
Registered Agents and Brokers, National Association of—891
Religious Freedom, Commission on International—888
Republican National Committee—529
Reserve System, Federal—880
Rifle Association, National—1, 5, 11–12, 19, 22, 766
Roman Catholic Church. *See* Holy See (Vatican City)
Russia
  International and U.S. sanctions—496, 511, 579, 582, 689, 853
  Minister of Foreign Affairs—146
  Nuclear material, safe disposal, cooperation with U.S.—407
  President—146, 366, 412, 465, 477, 497, 861, 868, 870, 874, 881
  Relations with Turkey—899
  Relations with Ukraine—85, 214
  Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with U.S., expansion—412, 663
  Syria, role—146, 184, 199, 201, 207, 687, 868, 874, 881
  Ukraine, role—874, 881
Rwanda
  Genocide, 22d anniversary—438
  Relations with U.S.—438

Saudi Arabia
  Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister—882
  Defense, Minister of—882, 895
  Deputy Crown Prince—895
  Execution of Shia cleric Nimr Al-Nimr—860
  Foreign Affairs, Minister of—882
  King—459–460, 882

Saudi Arabia—Continued
President Obama's visit—459, 463, 874, 882–883
Relations with U.S.—459, 882
Riyadh
Diriyah Palace—883
Erga Palace—882
Ritz-Carlton, Riyadh, hotel—882
U.S. Ambassador—882
U.S. Embassy staff and families, meeting with President Obama—882
Science and technology
See also Health and medical care
Human Genome Project, U.S.—192
International cooperation—347
Public-private partnerships—221
Research and development—107, 109, 169, 241, 443, 448–449, 504, 609, 719, 737, 791, 872
Stem cell research—265
Science and Technology Foundation, National Medals of—607
Science Board, National—895
Science Foundation, National—84, 607
SCOTUSblog.com—870
Securities Investor Protection Corporation—893
Senate Youth Program, U.S.—873
Singapore, Prime Minister—892
Slavery (historical) in U.S.—789
Small Business Administration—48, 248, 316
Smithsonian Institution, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts—867
Social Security and retirement
Financial advisers, fiduciary responsibility—756
Social Security program—28, 68, 111, 432, 711
Somalia
Al-Shabaab terrorist organization—453, 768
U.S. airstrikes—768
U.S. Ambassador-designate—417, 860
U.S. assistance—489
U.S. national emergency, continuation—417
U.S. sanctions—417
South by Southwest Interactive Festival—246–247, 257, 266, 295–296
South Carolina, 2015 shooting in Charleston—90, 92, 96, 766
South Korea
Defense relationship with U.S.—866
Free trade agreement with U.S.—644
President—390, 860, 866, 878
Relations with Japan—391, 860
Relations with U.S.—390, 411
South Sudan
Human rights issues—390
Political unrest and violence—390, 508
U.S. national emergency, continuation—389–390
Space program
Aeronautics and Space Administration, National—37, 422, 449
Mars exploration—449
Space Station, International—449, 872
Spain, President Obama's visit—893
Sports
Baseball—308, 326, 876
Basketball—98–99, 343, 571–572, 702, 824–826, 865, 878–880, 886–887, 890, 896–897
Football—78, 105, 157, 211–212, 515, 742–743, 861, 866, 871, 892
Golf—896
Hockey—152–153, 227, 761, 850, 867, 896
Invictus Games—879, 886–887
NCAA championship teams—571
Olympic Games—88, 572
State, Department of
100,000 Strong in the Americas initiative—344
Ambassadors. *See specific country*
Consular and passport services—272
Deputy Secretary—272, 865
Funding—422
Global Chiefs of Mission Conference—271
Hostage Affairs, Special Presidential Envoy for—814
Management and Resources, Deputy Secretary for—272
Northern Ireland, Secretary's Personal Representative for—278, 285, 874
Secretary—59–60, 101, 129, 146, 199, 225–226, 272–273, 285, 352, 361, 453, 458–459, 617, 619, 623, 630, 859, 862, 868, 872, 878, 883, 885, 896, 898
Tourist visas—272
State Justice Institute—882, 889
Supreme Court. *See* Judiciary
Surface Transportation Board—422
Sweden
International peace efforts, leadership—582
Prime Minister—575, 578, 591, 886, 888
Relations with U.S.—581
Syria
Chemical weapons stockpile, international removal efforts—272, 584, 688, 733
Civil war and sectarian conflict—31, 135, 146, 184, 199–201, 207, 229, 272–273, 340, 415, 453, 459, 461, 465–466, 470, 477, 495, 497–499, 508, 510, 538, 579, 582, 686–687, 734, 772, 853, 861, 863, 865, 868–870, 874, 881–884, 889
Democracy efforts—453, 460
Human rights issues—538
International diplomatic efforts—146, 199, 201, 861, 868, 870, 874
Iran, role—477
Jabhat al-Nusra insurgent organization—201, 453, 461, 499, 772

Syria—Continued
President—146, 199, 201, 453, 459, 465–466, 477, 521, 538, 734, 772
Refugees, humanitarian situation—96, 146, 184, 229, 334, 397, 461, 496, 514, 521, 538, 583, 658, 724–725, 865, 883
Russia, role—453, 477
Terrorism, sponsorship—538
U.N. Special Envoy—688
U.S. and coalition airstrikes—200, 207, 337, 360, 397, 403, 414, 421, 453, 734, 771, 828, 862
U.S. assistance—459, 734
U.S. military detachment—510, 768, 773
U.S. national emergency, continuation—537–538

Taxation
Corporate tax rates—419
Earned-income tax credit—45, 49
Oil barrel tax—107
Overseas tax havens, efforts to combat—418, 420, 558–559, 843
Tax avoidance, efforts to combat—559
Tax Code, reform—418–419, 443–444, 558, 601, 712–713, 739, 820, 837, 843
Tax relief—26, 28, 419
Tennessee, 2015 terrorist attack in Chattanooga—88, 161
Terrorism
See also Defense and national security; *specific country or region*
1995 bombing in Oklahoma City—291–292, 300, 302
Al Qaida terrorist organization—30–31, 88, 147, 180, 401, 410, 413, 436, 453–454, 461–462, 495, 627, 666, 684, 733, 766–769, 772–773, 783–784
Counterterrorism efforts—30, 38, 61, 110, 135, 161–162, 180, 199–201, 207, 273, 325, 337–338, 340, 360, 396–397, 401, 403–405, 408, 410, 422, 436, 452–454, 459, 464–466, 472, 474, 477, 495, 579, 582–583, 599, 627, 685, 749, 767–770, 772, 783, 786, 833, 873, 875, 878, 892, 894–895
Global threat—86, 141, 395, 403, 408, 413–414, 452, 481, 510–511, 684, 731, 749, 786, 850, 853
Guantanamo Bay detainees
Review and disposition—182
Transfer—181
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization—30, 38, 61, 79, 85, 88, 90, 110, 135, 137, 146–147, 161, 179–180, 184, 199–202, 207, 229, 249, 260, 263, 266, 269–270, 273, 306, 334, 337–338, 340, 342, 360, 368, 390, 397, 401, 403, 408, 410–411, 413–414, 421–422, 452–454, 459, 461–462, 464–465, 470, 474, 477, 484, 495, 499, 510, 579, 582–583, 663, 666, 684, 688, 690, 724, 727, 731, 733, 765–774, 778, 783–784, 786, 828, 853, 859, 862, 864, 866, 869, 871, 875, 878, 882–884, 887, 889, 892, 894

Terrorism—Continued
National Counterterrorism Center—894
September 11, 2001, attacks—86, 181, 210, 244, 481, 732
Terrorists
Prosecution—182
Torture of terrorism suspects, prohibition—735, 824
Texas
2015 shooting in Garland—161
Austin
Joe R. and Teresa Lozana Long Center for Performing Arts—873
South by Southwest Conference and Festival—221, 246–247, 257, 266, 295–296
Torchy's Tacos restaurant—873
Dallas Sheraton Hotel in Dallas—873
Democratic Party events—257, 262, 265, 270
Disaster assistance—866, 875, 884, 894
Floods, damage and recovery efforts—893
Ford Hood
2009 shooting—773
Death of soldiers in flash flooding—893
Governor—260, 268
President's visit—246–247, 257, 262, 265, 270, 873
Thailand
King—752
Political reform efforts—142
Relations with U.S.—752
Tibet
Climate change impacts, mitigation efforts—895
Dalai Lama—894
Government-in-exile, status dialogue with China—894
Time magazine—871
Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting—362–363, 365, 367
Trade. *See* Business and industry; Commerce, international
Trade agreements or negotiations. *See* Commerce, international; *specific country or region*
Trade Commission, Federal—422
Trade Policy and Negotiations, Advisory Committee for—885, 887
Trade Representative, Office of the U.S.—166, 171, 190, 573, 641, 848–849
Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)—31, 61, 72, 93, 141–142, 165–167, 169, 229, 273–274, 485, 497, 502, 574, 614–615, 618–620, 624, 631–632, 636, 643–645, 647, 652–654, 658, 662, 678, 711, 791, 828, 833, 836, 852, 861, 887, 896
Transportation, Department of
Funding—422
Policy, Under Secretary for—887
Secretary—164

Transportation infrastructure, national, improvement efforts—29, 443, 705, 737, 837
Treasury, Department of the
  Corporate inversion schemes, regulation—444, 558, 712
  Financial Crimes Enforcement Network—559
  Internal Revenue Service—111, 418
  Management, Assistant Secretary for—899
  Secretary—409, 458–459, 771, 839, 863, 873, 887, 897
  Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, Under Secretary–designate for—772
Trinidad and Tobago, Ambassador to U.S.—898
Turkey
  Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.—768, 828, 833, 862, 869, 889, 899
  Human rights issues—411
  Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terrorist organization—862, 889
  President—411, 828, 862, 869, 878, 889, 895, 899
  Relations with Iraq—860
  Relations with Israel—899
  Relations with Russia—899
  Relations with U.S.—828
  Security cooperation with U.S.—411, 878
  Syrian refugees, humanitarian situation—496, 513
  Terrorist attacks in Ankara and Diyarbakir Province—869, 878, 889
  Terrorist attacks in Istanbul—495, 508, 828, 833, 850, 862–863, 898–899
Twitter—861

Ukraine
  Democracy efforts—496
  International diplomatic efforts—662, 689, 861, 863, 868, 870, 874, 881, 884
  Nuclear material, safe disposal, cooperation with U.S.—407
  Political unrest and violence—85, 110, 214, 227, 273, 415, 470, 508, 511, 579, 689, 694, 731, 868, 870, 874, 881
  Russia, role—85, 214, 415, 421, 470, 508, 511, 579, 582, 689, 694, 853
  U.S. Ambassador—889
  U.S. national emergency, continuation—213–214
UNESCO. *See* United Nations
United Arab Emirates
  Abu Dhabi, Crown Prince—882
  Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces—882
United Kingdom
  Duchess of Cambridge—883
  Duke of Cambridge—883
  Duke of Edinburgh—469, 480, 883
  Duke of Sussex—883
United Kingdom—Continued
  European Union, membership status—470–471, 474, 476, 675, 802, 814, 822, 836, 839–840, 851–852, 865, 884, 897–898
  Grove golf course in Watford—884
  Labour Party leader—883
  London
    10 Downing Street—883
    2005 terrorist attacks—481
    Foreign and Commonwealth Office—883
    Globe Theatre—883
    Grosvenor House hotel—883
    Kensington Palace—883
    Royal Horticultural Halls—883
    Winfield House—883–884
  Member of Parliament, murder in Birstall—895–896
  Northern Ireland
    Deputy First Minister—278, 285, 483, 874
    First Minister—278, 285, 483, 874
    Foreign Affairs and Trade, Minister of—285
    Peace talks and diplomatic efforts—278, 285, 287, 483, 874
    Secretary of State—285
  President Obama's visit—467, 480, 874, 881, 883
  Prime Minister—139, 484, 490, 496, 510, 529, 802, 840, 865, 870, 883–884, 898
  Queen—469, 476, 480, 529, 566, 883
  Relations with U.S.—469–470, 473, 476, 481, 483, 814, 840, 898
  U.S. Ambassador—285, 477, 480, 482, 491
  U.S. Embassy staff and families, meeting with President Obama—883
  Windsor Castle in Windsor—883
United Nations
  Electronic Communications in International Contracts, U.N. Convention on the Use of—128–129
  Framework Convention on Climate Change—586, 692
  General Assembly—274, 521, 579
  High Commissioner for Refugees—793
  Independent Guarantees and Stand-By Letters of Credit, U.N. Convention on—126
  International Trade, U.N. Convention on Assignment of Receivables in—127
  Libya, U.N. Support Mission in (UNSMIL)—689
  Peacekeeping operations—509, 584, 616, 625, 633, 691
  Refugees, Convention Relating to the Status of—687
  Security Council—179, 213, 453, 484, 751
  Syria, U.N. Special Envoy for—688
  Torture, U.N. Convention Against—824
  U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)—525
  Yemen, U.N. Special Envoy for—461, 690
United Service Organizations—555
United State of Women Summit—774–775
Uruguay, U.S. Ambassador—860

U.S. *See other part of subject*
USAID. *See* Development, U.S. Agency for International
Utah
  Former U.S. Senator, death—554
  Governor—160–161, 163–165
  KSL in Salt Lake City—864

Vatican. *See* Holy See (Vatican City)
Venezuela
  Economic growth and development—309
  Political unrest and violence—219, 691, 834
  U.S. national emergency, continuation—219
Vermont
  Governor—158, 171, 173, 225
  Paid sick leave legislation, passage—225
Veterans
  Benefits—27, 456, 555, 560
  Health and medical care—382, 456
  Hiring incentives—206, 556
  Homelessness—48, 71, 556, 725
  Job training and education assistance—556
  Meeting with President—896
  Mental health issues—456
  Service and dedication—48
  Service organizations—456
  Unemployment and underemployment—556
  Women veterans—556
Veterans Affairs, Department of
  Assistant Secretaries
    Congressional and Legislative Affairs—887
    Public and Intergovernmental Affairs—881
  Funding—725
  Program improvements—48
  Secretary—455
  Veterans Health Administration—48, 382, 456
Veterans of Foreign Wars—870
VICE News—888
Vice President. *See* White House Office
Vietnam
  Civil society leaders, meeting with President Obama—627
  Communist Party General Secretary—622, 627, 890
  Economic growth and development—627, 629–630, 634–636, 638–639, 641, 647, 649, 653
  Educational exchanges with U.S.—614, 630, 642, 646
  Hanoi
    International Convention Center—890
    JW Marriott Hotel Hanoi—890
    National Convention Center—890
    Presidential Palace—890
Vietnam—Continued
  Ho Chi Minh City
    Dreamplex Coworking Space—634–635, 890
    GEM Center—890
    InterContinental Asiana Saigon hotel—890
    Jade Emperor Pagoda—890
    U.S. consulate staff, meeting with President Obama—890
  Human rights issues—313, 485, 615, 618, 625, 627–628, 632–633
  National Assembly Chairwoman—622, 627, 890
  Nuclear energy, cooperation with U.S.—616, 626
  President—613, 622–623, 627, 890
  President Obama's visit—613, 618, 622, 627–628, 634, 644, 887, 890
  Prime Minister—622, 627, 868, 890
  Relations with U.S.—614, 617, 619, 623–624, 626, 629–630, 633–635, 646, 660–661, 664, 868
  Science and technology, cooperation with U.S.—615, 631, 646
  Security cooperation with U.S.—615, 618, 625, 632
  Trade with U.S.—614–615, 623–624, 630, 636, 647
  Unexploded ordance removal and dioxin remediation, U.S. support—615, 625, 630
  U.S. assistance—624, 626
  U.S. Embassy staff, meeting with President Obama—890
  U.S. visa policy—624
Virginia
  Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria—877
  Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington—698, 891
  Disaster assistance—872
  Governor—160, 164–165
  President's visits—9, 452, 698, 860, 877, 880, 891
  WWBT in Richmond—864
Voluntarism—99, 212, 534, 543, 572, 743, 825

Washington
  Democratic Party events—821, 897
  Disaster assistance—862, 865
  Governor—815, 897
  President's visit—815, 821, 897
  U.S. Representative, retirement—3
  Westin Seattle hotel in Seattle—897
Washington, DC. *See* District of Columbia
Weapons of mass destruction. *See* Arms and munitions
West Virginia
  Disaster assistance—898
  Flooding, damage and recovery efforts—898
  Governor—898

Western Hemisphere
See also Central America; Commerce, international
Inter-American Human Rights System—334
Organization of American States—334
White House Correspondents' Association—528, 559, 884–885
White House Council on Women and Girls—775
White House Easter Egg Roll—361, 877–878
White House Mentorship and Leadership Program—758–759
White House News Photographers Association—881
White House Office
Assistants to the President
Cabinet Secretary—759
Chief of Staff—860, 894
Chief Technology Officer—448
Counterterrorism, Deputy National Security Adviser for—59
Homeland Security and Counterterrorism—875, 877, 882, 889, 894, 898
Legislative Affairs, Director—83
National Security Adviser—59–60, 454, 865, 873, 876, 882–883, 898
Press Secretary—105, 418–420, 517–518
Public Engagement, Deputy Director for—753
Science and Technology Policy—450, 607
Senior Adviser—300–301, 864
Southeast Asia, Oceania, and East Asian Security Affairs, Director—646
Special Assistant and Principal Travel Aide—884
Strategic Communications, Deputy National Security Adviser for—59, 876, 883, 894
Trip Director—884
ConnectED initiative—252, 256
Drug Control Policy, Office of National—371, 376
Economic Advisers, Council of—860
Economic Council, National—860
Global Coalition To Counter ISIL, Special Presidential Envoy for the—59, 199, 873
Intergovernmental Affairs, Office of—164
Interns—885
"My Brother's Keeper" initiative—72, 99, 134, 758–759, 881
Science and Technology Policy, White House Office of—448
Security Council, National—199, 452, 770, 861, 870, 880, 887, 894
U.S. Digital Service—248–249, 256
White House Office—Continued
Vice President—5–6, 26, 29, 35, 38, 45, 111, 158, 163–164, 183, 199, 204, 279, 284–285, 287, 384–385, 390, 455, 529, 555, 557, 702, 783, 785, 859–861, 863–866, 870–875, 878–881, 884–889, 893–896, 898
White House Rural Council—172, 865
White House Science Fair—447, 449–451, 454, 879–880
White House Task Force on New Americans—551
Wisconsin
Governor—217
Milwaukee
Engine Company 3 restaurant—872
United Community Center—215
WISN—864, 885
President's visit—214, 871–872, 893–894
Women and girls
"Let Girls Learn" initiative, White House—225, 295, 758, 778
Women and Girls, White House Council on—82
World Bank—472, 509, 686
World Health Organization—679–680, 751
World Humanitarian Summit—888
World Trade Organization—188, 643, 678
World War I Centennial Commission—892
Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride—455–456
Wyoming, Governor—167

Yahoo! Finance—881
Yemen
Democracy efforts—574
International diplomatic efforts—690
Political unrest and violence—273, 460–462, 464, 882–883
Security cooperation with U.S.—769
U.N. Special Envoy—461, 690
U.S. airstrikes—769
U.S. national emergency, continuation—574
Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)—274, 482, 650
Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative, President's—274, 316, 342–344, 482, 650
Young Leaders of the United Kingdom—480, 482
Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI)—141, 143, 274, 482, 614, 635, 644–646, 650, 890
YouTube—861

Zimbabwe
Democracy efforts—214
U.S. national emergency, continuation—214

Name Index

Abadi, Haider al- —464–465, 859, 889
Abbas, Mahmoud—355
Abbott, Alston—755
Abbott, Deidra—755
Abbott, Ethan—755
Abbott, Frank—755
Abbott, Gregory W.—260, 268
Abdeslam, Salah—875
Abdul-Jabbar, Kareem—88
Abdullah, Abdullah—872
Abdullah II, King—184, 861, 866
Abdulmutallab, Umar Farouk—182
Abe, Shinzo—390, 404, 657, 662, 670, 860, 866, 878, 891
Abedini, Saeed—59, 96
Abele, Chris—215
Abell, Daniel—536
Aberly, Naomi—270
Abraham, Katharine G.—889
Acton, Mark D.—895, 908
Adams, William J. "will.i.am," Jr.—257
Adams, Yolanda Y.—192
Aderholt, Robert B.—94
Adler, Stephen I.—247, 873
Afghahi, Khosrow—59
Agius, Pierre Clive—872
Ahmed, Maryam—482
Akhunzada, Haibatullah—666
Alarie, Pierre—898
Alberts, Rod—862
Alcide, Thomas J.—202, 871
Aldama Suarez, Sandra Lidice—316, 327
Alexander, A. Lamar, Jr.—75, 197, 870
Alexander, Keith B.—880
Ali, Mohsin—92
Ali, Muhammad—88, 326, 740, 892–893
Ali-Osman, Francis—895
Alito, Samuel A., Jr.—145, 430
Allen, Debbie—156
Allman, Jan—882
Alvarez Silva, Abelardo—320–321
Alwine, Abigail K.—704
Amanat, Sana—295
Amano, Yukiya—399–400
Anderson, Anne—285–286
Anderson, Blair—887, 906
Anderson, C.J.—742
Anderson, Phyliss J.—869
Andrus, Beth M.—881, 905
Anh, Hàng Lâm Trang "Suboi"—656
Anthony, Will—516
Antón, Annie I.—880
Aponte, Mari del Carmen—896
Arcidiacono, Ryan—703
Arlea, Madeline Cox—49–50, 176
Arnsdorf, Isaac—366
Aronson, Bernard W.—100
Asad, Bashar al- —146, 199, 201, 453, 459, 461, 465–466, 477, 521, 538, 734, 772
Ashford, John B.—34–35, 39
Atkin, Thomas—890, 907
Augustus, Seimone—825
Aung San Suu Kyi—879
Auriemma, Geno—571–572, 880
Austin, Charlene—421–422
Austin, Lloyd J., III—421–422
Autry, Curt—864
Awada, Juliana—357–358, 877

Bacon, Richard—896
Baird, Douglas G.—423
Baker, Charles D.—172
Baker, James E.—897
Bakkar, Sulayman Dawud "Abu Dawud" al- —452, 733, 768
Balmaña, Elisenda Vives—872
Banga, Ajaypal S.—880
Barber, DaJon—429
Barber, Dwight—429
Barchi, Robert—596
Barden, Mark—3, 7
Barkley, Charles W.—703
Barksdale, Patricia D.—885, 906
Barnes, Harrison B.J.—98–99
Barnwell, Ysaÿe M.—889, 907
Barrett, Thomas M.—215–216
Barzun, Matthew W.—285, 477, 480, 482, 491
Bass, John R.—888
Bass, Karen—439, 877
Bassett, Christopher B.—8
Batten, Rodney—881
Battle, William R.—211
Bauer, Robert F.—120
Baumy, Ismail Mohamed—735
Beard, Susan F.—881, 905
Beatty, Donald W.—871, 902
Becerra, Xavier—78, 439
Becker, Bradley A.—698
Becker, Daniel J.—889, 907
Beers, Rand—889

Belfour, Eddie—153
Bell, Stuart R.—211
Benedict, David—571
Benemann, Jim—864
Benioff, Marc R.—82
Benjamin, Georges C.—882
Benjamin, Renee—202
Benjamin, Steven K.—71
Bennet, Michael F.—188
Bennett, Joyce—554
Bennett, Robert F.—554
Bentley, Robert J.—211
Benton, David—869
Bergen, Peter—884
Bergenroth, Emily—448
Bergling, Tim "Avicii"—576
Bernard, Mark—153
Bevin, Matthew G.—173–174
Bhumibol Adulyadej—752
Biden, Ashley B.—287
Biden, Finnegan J.—287
Biden, Jill T.—46, 206, 555–557, 702, 788, 887, 896
Biden, Joseph R., Jr.—5–6, 26, 29, 35, 38, 45, 111, 158, 163–164, 183, 199, 204, 279, 284–285, 287, 384–385, 390, 455, 529, 555, 557, 702, 783–785, 859–861, 863–866, 870–875, 878–881, 884–889, 893–896, 898
Biden, Naomi K.—287
Biden, Natalie P.—287
Biden, Roberta M. "Maisy"—287
Biden, R. Hunter—287
Biden, R. Hunter, II—287
Biedryzcki, John A.—870
Bienenstock, Arthur—895
Biggs, Heidi Neel—904
Bilkovich, Jessica—455
Bingaman, Jesse F. "Jeff"—882
Binns, E.K.—516
Bird, Sue—825
Bittel, Stephen H.—736, 738
Bitter, Rena—889, 907
Blackmon, Traci D.—864
Blair, Tony—482
Blakely, Sara—803
Blanchard, Anita K.—817
Blecharczyk, Nathan—320
Blinken, Antony J.—272, 865
Bloomberg, Michael R.—529
Bocelli, Andrea—94
Boehner, John A.—885
Bogan, Raymond—867
Bogut, Andrew M.—99
Bokova, Irina—525
Boland, Eavan—287
Borders, Lisa—825
Bosley, Pamela—23
Bottenfield, Raymond—603
Botticelli, Michael P.—371
Boucher, Robert V.—668
Bouman, John—114
Bounds, Hank M.—34
Bourdain, Anthony—890
Bowlen, Annabel—742
Bowlen, Pat—742
Bowman, Leslie Greene—885, 905
Bowser, Muriel E.—826
Boxer, Barbara—796
Boyle, Joshua—815
Bradlee, Benjamin C., Jr.—531
Brady, Thomas E.P., Jr.—743
Bragg, Heather—74
Bragg, Mike—74
Brandon, Thomas E.—2, 6
Brandt, Jack M.—888
Branstad, Terry E.—160
Brant, Ramona—387–388, 429, 878
Breasseale, J. Todd—872
Breckenridge, Anita J. Decker—476
Brennan, John O.—452, 882
Brewer, David V.—882, 905
Bridges, Leon—192
Britt, Isiah—543–544, 548
Britt, L.D.—563
Broaddus, Mandy—869
Brooks, Ethel—860
Brooks, Karl B.—905
Brown, Antonio D.—785
Brown, Brent—215–216, 218, 872
Brown, Corrine—202
Brown, Dahkota Kicking Bear—869
Brown, Demond—515
Brown, Dorothy—162
Brown, Edmund G. "Jerry," Jr.—158, 417, 445
Brown, Gordon—482
Brown, Greg—596
Brown, Kate—158, 213
Brown, Norman O.—387–388, 429, 878
Brown, Sam W., Jr.—891
Brownfield, William R.—896
Brummer, Christopher J.—872, 903
Brune, Nancy E.—880
Brush, Mitchell O.—555
Buckley, Martha—153
Buffet, Warren E.—36
Bunce, Rebecca—483
Burke, Darryl W.—555
Burke, Patrick A.—865, 902
Burnell, S. Jocelyn Bell—596, 599
Burnett, Mark—94

Burwell, Sylvia Mathews—171–173, 276, 540, 542, 609, 863–864
Bush, George H.W.—291
Bush, George W.—5, 181, 183, 238, 387, 476, 644, 707, 878
Butts, Cassandra Q.—697, 753, 903, 908
Butts, Charles N.—755
Byers, Edward C., Jr.—208, 865, 870
Byers, Hannah—208, 210
Byers, Madison—208, 210
Byers, Peggy—208, 210

Cabrera, Orlando—100
Cahill, James—596
Calhoun, Troy—730
Califf, Robert M.—198
Camargo, Francisco—303
Cameron, David—139, 467, 484, 490, 496, 510, 529, 802, 840, 865, 870, 883–884, 898
Cameron, Samantha G.—470
Campbell, Kim—855
Campbell, Susan W.—218, 872
Campbell, Terrence J.—864, 902
Canjura de Centeno, Claudia Ivette—898
Cardin, Louis F.—306
Cardin, Mary Pat—699
Carillo, Eloise—753
Carney, Chris—455
Carol, Matt—531
Carpenter, Seth B.—906
Carper, Thomas R.—617, 619, 861
Carr, James G.—241, 845
Carr, Robert O.—870
Carson, Andre—86
Carson, Brad R.—904
Carter, Almo J.—875, 904
Carter, Ashton B.—181, 183, 199–200, 421, 698, 771, 859, 864, 873, 879, 882–883, 887–898
Carter, Jimmy—227, 359
Carter, Walter E. "Ted," Jr.—515
Casey, Robert P., Jr.—866
Casper, Anne S.—889, 907
Castaneda, Susan L.—872, 903
Castano, Jeison "Jeihco"—101
Castellanos, Caridad—303
Castro, Joaquín—553, 644
Castro, Maria del Rosario—553
Castro Ruz, Fidel—307
Castro Ruz, Raúl—159, 304, 318, 324–326, 328–329, 344, 350, 366, 876
Castrodad, Isamari—899
Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge—883
Chabinsky, Steven R.—880
Chamberlain, Jeff—870
Châu, Ngô Bao—631
Chavez, Anthony—753
Chavez, Helen Fabela—753
Chavez, Paul—753
Chayten, Kameria—878
Cheney, Richard B.—276
Cheng, Karissa—448
Chernow, Ron—276
Chesky, Brian J.—316, 319–320
Chirico, Emanuel—885
Chouchane, Noureddine—147, 201
Choummali Saignason—140–141
Christensen, John E.—34
Chu, Judy—550–551
Clapper, James R., Jr.—408
Clark, Brooke—699
Clauw, Mitch—862
Clinton, Hillary Rodham—147, 236, 262, 310, 329, 353, 431, 528, 530, 559–560, 664–665, 723, 727, 757, 775, 855, 893
Clinton, William J.—387, 707, 713, 878
Clooney, George T.—702
Clyburn, James E.—78
Coates, Ta-Nehisi P.—566, 887
Coggins, Donald C., Jr.—871, 902
Cohen, Ilona R.—875
Coker, Jake—212
Colbert, Stephen T.—866
Coldwell, Pedro Joaquin—845
Cole, Jermaine L.—257
Cole, Kay—257
Coleman, Caitlan—815
Collins, Chris—603
Collins, Francis S.—193, 197, 449
Collison, Patrick—803
Colman, Isobel—877
Comey, James B., Jr.—2, 6, 91, 603, 763–766, 770–771, 894
Compaore, Chantel—108
Constantine, Dow—815
Conte, Henriette—108
Contreras-Sweet, Maria—316
Conyers, John J., Jr.—64, 542
Cooper, Anderson—9–12, 14–24
Copeland, Misty—871
Copeny, Amariyanna—886
Copeny, Mari—519, 542, 548
Corbyn, Jeremy B.—883
Còrdova, France A.—607
Corey, Dan—887
Corker, Robert P., Jr.—75
Cornyn, John, III—293
Correa Delgado, Rafael—882
Corrigan, Brian—279
Corrigan, Donncha—279
Corrigan, Gerard—279

Corsa, Joshua—783
Costa Checa, Mariana—804, 806–808, 811, 821
Counts, Walter D., III—874, 903
Cowan, Lee—862–863
Cox, Brendan—895
Cox, Jo—895–896
Cox, Laverne—779
Cox, Robert—359
Craig, Gregory B.—754
Craig-Taylor, Phyliss—891
Cranston, Brian—885
Crist, Charles J., Jr.—736
Cristo Bustos, Juan Fernando—865
Criswell, Paula—92
Crowley, Joseph—286
Cruz, Rafael B.—338
Cruz, R. Edward "Ted"—235, 244, 267, 329, 338, 420, 440, 442, 530
Cruz, Sophie—886
Cullerton, John J.—113–114
Cullom, Phillip H.—901
Cuomo, Andrew M.—416
Curry, Riley—98
Curry, W. Stephen, II—99
Custer, Nicholas—886
Cutter, Alicia—448

Daddah, Mohamedoun—898
Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso—894
Dalton, Jason Brian—162
Daly, William L., III—152
Damon, Matthew P.—37
Darehshori, Sara—860
Darling, Scott—153
Daschle, Thomas A.—754
Davis, Blaise—703
Davis, Danny K.—423, 429
Davis, Patti—222
Dawson, Horace G., Jr.—563
Dawson, Rigel J.—544, 886
Day, Andra—192
Dayton, Mark B.—158, 169
Da'ud, Abdullahi Haji—768
Deal, J. Nathan—517
Dean, Howard B.—523
DeGeneres, Ellen—867
DeLaurentis, Jeffrey—303
DeLaurentis, Jennifer—303
DelBene, Suzan K.—815, 818, 820–821
Delgado, Sylvia—753
del Río, Idania—316, 318–319
Demings, Jerry L.—783
Dempsey, James X.—875, 904
Derian, Patricia M.—359
Dermer, Rhoda P.—75
Dermer, Ron—75–76
Diamonte, Robin L.—877
Diaz, J. Michael—881, 905
DiCaprio, Leonardo—365, 870
Dierking, Cammy—885
Dillard, Kirk W.—114, 867
Dingell, Deborah A.—64, 542
Dingell, John D., Jr.—64
Dion, Stephane—873
Ditka, Michael K.—153
Dodson, Emery—448
Doggett, Lloyd A., II—257
Dole, Elizabeth H.—886
Dole, Robert J.—732
Donilon, Thomas E.—151, 162, 869
Donnelly, Joseph S.—704, 711
Donohue, Peter M.—702
Donovan, Shaun L.S.—171
Dowdell, Teana—66, 862
Downey, Roma—94, 97
Drake, Kenyan—212
Duckworth, Kendrick Lamar—566
Duggan, Michael E.—64, 66, 862
Duncan, Arne—41
Dunford, Joseph F., Jr.—199, 421, 435, 698, 771
Dung, Nguyen Tan—868
Dunkin, Kenneth—118
Dunn, Bonnie A. Barsamian—893, 908
Durbin, Loretta S.—123
Durbin, Richard J.—113, 123, 423, 429–430
Duterte, Rodrigo—888
Dye, Rebecca F.—890, 907
Dyer, John "Buddy," Jr.—763, 781, 783, 894

Earley, Darnell—543
Earnest, Joshua R.—105, 418–420, 517–518
Easley, Betty—887
Echeverria, Manuel—877
Edelman, Marian Wright—891
Edelman, Todd E.—885, 906
Edmonds, Chris—97
Edwards, Huw—883
Edwards, John Bel—41–42
Egli, Kevin—49–50
Eickelberg, Henry C.—886
Eisen, Norman L.—860
Elder, Christine A.—867, 902
Elizabeth II, Queen—469, 476, 480, 529, 566, 883
Ellis, Brent A.—730
Ellis, Joe—742
Ellis-Kirk, Matrice—265, 270
Ellison, Keith M.—86
Elway, John—742–743
Emmert, Dixie—387
Emmert, Jessie—387

Emmert, Phillip A.—387–388, 429, 878
Erdogan, Recep Tayyip—411, 828, 862, 869, 878, 889, 895, 899
Escobedo, Efrain—554
Escobedo, Efrain, Sr.—554
Escobedo, Rosa M.—554
Eshoo, Anna G.—441
Estefan, Gloria—326
Estrada, Cindy—64
Etim, Linda—877
Etoundi, Essomba—898
Evans, Rachel Held—864
Evans Smith, Annette A.—905

Fallon, James T., Jr.—893
Fallon, Katherine Beirne—83
Fanning, Eric K.—759
Faridi, Tooraj—59
Farmer, Raymond G.—860, 901
Farrell, Patrick—703
Fauci, Anthony S.—609, 863
Feehan, Daniel P.—890, 907
Feeley, John D.—896
Feierstein, Mark—861
Ferguson, Bob—815
Fialka-Feldman, Micah—892
Finley, Stephanie A.—865, 902
Finnes, Sindre—575, 591, 888
Fischer, Leah S.—137
Fischer, Samuel N.—137
Fishman, Paul J.—49, 176
Flake, Jeffrey L.—527
Flanagan, Charles—285
Flores, Cesar—783
Flores, Mercedez M.—783
Foley, Mike—34
Ford, Cedric Larry—202
Foster, Arlene—278, 285, 483, 874
Foster, Bill—423, 429
Fowke, Ben—882
Fowles, Sylvia—825
Foxx, Anthony R.—164
Francis, Pope—32, 77, 96, 306, 343, 358, 386, 479, 514
Frederick, Wayne A.I.—563, 569, 886
Freeland, Chrystia—848–849, 898
Freeman, Morgan—525, 868
Frieden, Thomas R.—609, 863
Froman, Michael B.—166, 171, 641, 848–849
Frost, E. Scott—874, 903
Fugate, W. Craig—163, 701
Fukuda, Yoshihiko—668
Fuller, Richard C., III—162, 870
Furey, George—899
Furman, Jason L.—860
Furman, Jill—276

Gabel, Robyn—120
Galanes, Philip—885
Gallagher, Patrick D.—880
Gallas, Thomas M.—860
Galloway, Noah—887
Ganesan, Anarudh—450
Garbaciak, Joyce—864
Gardner, Cory—528
Garland, Jessica—291–292
Garland, Lynn Rosenman—292
Garland, Merrick B.—290, 300, 302–303, 424–428, 430, 432, 434–435, 439, 442, 517–518, 527, 529, 601, 798, 819, 822, 873, 904
Garland, Rebecca—291, 292
Garland, Shirley—291, 302
Garza, Christopher J.—668
Gates, Robert M.—367
Gates, William H., III—53, 109, 648, 804
Geidner, Chris—888
George, Joe—218
George, Karen—218, 872
George, Katie—218
George, Nate—218
George, Prince—480, 529
Getty, Ann—441
Getty, Gordon—441
Ghahreman, Arash—59
Ghani Ahmadzai, Ashraf—627, 872
Gibson, Susan S.—881, 905
Giffords, Gabrielle D.—1, 3, 12, 21
Giffords, Gloria F.—3
Gilbert, Gary—882
Ginobili, Emanuel D.—343
Ginsberg, Benjamin L.—120
Ginsberg, Ruth Bader—139, 775
Gladchuk, Chet—515
Glanville, Doug—876
Glenn, Larry T.—875, 904
Gohlke, Valerie—895
Goldberg, Jeffrey—366, 863
Goldfein, David L.—729
Golestaneh, Nima—59
Gonzalez, Gloria—330
Gonzalez, Yanely—553
Goodlatte, Robert W.—865
Goodman, Jordan—881
Goodson, Precious—886
Gordon, Faith—8
Gosselin, Jacob—362
Gosselin, Nora—362
Gosselin, Peter—362
Gostin, Lawrence—895
Gracias, Antonio J.—803
Graham, Lindsey O.—527
Grandi, Filippo—793

Grassley, Charles E.—865, 869, 871
Grebe, Austin—515
Green, Draymond J.—99
Green, Stephen A.—156
Green, Timothy—542
Grégoire-Trudeau, Sophie—226–227, 230, 243–244, 849, 873, 899
Grubb, David—368
Guadagno, Kim—596
Guajardo Villarreal, Ildefonso—898
Guillén, Ozzie—153
Guindon, Ashley M.—604
Gupta, Sanjay—367, 369–370, 372–382
Gustafson, Peggy E.—883, 905
Guthrie, Savannah—529
Gutierrez, Mario—604
Gutiérrez, Yondainer—316
Guzman, Jesse—553
Guzmán Loera, Joaquin "El Chapo"—861

Habib, Dan—888
Hadley, Jeffrey—162, 870
Haggerty, Ben "Macklemore"—595–596
Haines, Avril D.—59
Hall, Anne—875, 904
Hall, Robert—894
Hallinan, Patrick K.—698
Hallisey, Olivia—450–451
Halperin, Morton H.—881
Halstead, Billy—123
Hamblin, James—192–197, 199, 870
Hamilton, Adam—864
Hamilton, Anthony—192
Hamilton, Isabel—303
Hamilton, Scott—303
Hancock, Herbie—525–526
Hancock, Michael B.—742
Hang, Do Thi Thúy—636–637, 639–643
Hanh, Thích Nhat—630
Hanna, Julie—316
Hanna-Attisha, Mona—886
Harden, R. David—864, 902
Harkins, Derrick—387
Harmon, Don—120
Harrington, Harold—886
Harrington, Page—445
Harris, F. Allen "Tex"—359
Harry, Prince—883
Hart, Gary W.—278, 285, 874
Hart, Josh—702
Hasan, Nidal M.—773
Hashem, Ali—483
Hassan, Margaret Wood—172
Hatch, Orrin G.—291, 300, 870, 887
Haukio, Jenni—575, 591, 888
Hawkins, Jeffrey—877
Hawthorne, Barbara—162
Hayden, Carla D.—870, 902
Hayes, Jahana—532–536, 886
Hayes, Ollie—286
Haywood, Rebecca Ross—874, 903
Healy, Henry—286
Heck, Dennis L.—821
Heholt, Melissa—257
Hekmati, Ali—59
Hekmati, Amir M.—59
Hekmati, Behnaz—59
Hekmati, Leila—59
Hekmati, Sarah—59
Henderson, Isaiah—783
Hendon, Rickey R.—113
Hendrix, James W.—874, 903
Hennessy, John—801
Henry, Derrick—211–212
Henry, Dori—877
Henry, Gladys—212
Herbert, Gary R.—160–165
Herencia, Roberto R.—872, 903
Hernandez, Johnny P., Jr.—553
Heyman, Bruce—873
Hickenlooper, John W.—157, 729
Hiebert, Scott—895
Higbee, Joshua—202
Higginbottom, Heather A.—272
Higgins, David—730
Hillman, Ronnie—742
Hirozawa, Kent Y.—885, 906
Hoagland, Bradley T.—555
Hochberg, Fred P.—759
Hogan, Lawrence J., Jr.—170
Holden, Melvin L. "Kip"—41, 54
Holdren, John P.—448, 450, 607
Holguin Cuellar, Maria Angela—865
Hollande, François—397, 496, 500, 510–511, 870, 875, 884, 894
Holmes, James E.—784
Hopewell, Bobby J.—162, 870
Horn, Alan—439
Horn, Cindy—439
Horton, William R.—430
Howard, Brittany—192
Howard, O. Terrius Jabari "O.J."—212
Howe, Gordie—761
Howe, Mark—761
Howe, Marty—761
Howroyd, Janice Bryant—886
Hoyer, Steny H.—78
Htin Kyaw—389, 879
Huerta, Dolores C.—779
Huffman, Jared W.—441

Hughes, Dorothy Pitman—775
Hughes, Lisabeth Tabor—875, 904
Huguenin, Lisa—795
Humayan, Mark—608
Hurley, William "Whurley"—257
Hutchinson, Ora—36
Hutchinson, Rebecca—36

Ifill, Gwen—714–719, 721–728
Iguodola, Andre T.—99
Ingjaldsdóttir, Ingibjörg Elsa—575, 591, 888
Inhofe, James M.—600
Inskeep, Steve—898
Inslee, Jay R.—815, 897
Israel, Steven J.—8, 866
Issoufou, Mahamadou—878

Jackson, Mark—702
Jackson, Phillip D.—153
Jackson, Quincy—211
Jackson, Shirley A.—608
Jacobs, Dennis J.—867
Jacobs, Sander—276
James, Deborah Lee—555, 729
James, LeBron R.—99
Jamison, Judith—156
Jarrett, Valerie B.—300–301, 775–776, 864
Jefferson, Ciearra—570
Jefferson, Moriah—572
Jemison, Mae C.—779
Jenkins, Angie—387–388, 429, 878
Jenkins, Felicia—703
Jenkins, Kris—703
Jenner, Kendall—529
Jeter, Derek S.—876, 893
Jewell, Sarah M.R. "Sally"—160, 168, 445
Jóhannsson, Sigurdur Ingi—575, 578, 591, 886, 888
John, Daymond G.—316
Johnson, Broderick D.—759
Johnson, Eddie Bernice—266
Johnson, Jeh C.—152, 759, 771, 800, 861, 894, 898
Johnson, Katherine G.—29, 775
Johnson, Michelle D.—729–730, 735
Johnson, Ronald H.—217
Johnston, Abbey—872
Johnston, Robert A.—533
Jones, Danny—368
Jones, Emil, Jr.—113–114
Jones, Quincy D., Jr.—191
Jones, Zachary—368
Jordan, Michael—565, 753
Jordan, Vernon E., Jr.—564, 864
Jorge-Reyes, Javier—785
Joseph, Asha—209
Joseph, Celicia—209
Joseph, Che'dra—41, 52
Joseph, Dilip—209
Joseph, Eshaan—209
Joseph, Jaron—209
Joseph, Krista—699
Joseph, Tobiah—209
Jubayr, Adil al-Ahmad al- —882
Jung, William F.—885, 906
Jurvetson, Steven—803

Kagan, Elena—143, 263, 300, 427, 435
Kalik, Daniel—881
Kallon, Abdul K.—867, 902
Kaniut, Christopher—202
Karim, Mae A.—755
Karlin, Steve—885
Kartsotis, Tom—66, 862
Katz, Andy—874
Kauffman, David K.—202, 871
Kawar, Dina Khalil Tawfiq—898
Keating, Charles H., III—699
Keating, Charles H., IV—886
Keiderling-Franz, Kelly—860, 901
Kelly, Claude J., III—865, 902
Kelly, Mark E.—3, 21, 449
Kelly, Ryan—212
Kelly, Scott J.—3, 21, 872
Kennedy, Anthony M.—144, 186
Kennedy, Caroline B.—285
Kennedy, Eleanor—286
Kennedy, Joseph P., III—286
Kennedy, Lena—134
Kenny, Enda—278–281, 285–288, 873
Kenny, Fionnuala—279, 285, 288
Kenyatta, Uhuru—897
Kerr, Steve—98–99
Kerrey, J. Robert—208, 646
Kerry, John F.—59–60, 101, 146, 199, 225, 272–273, 285, 352, 361, 453, 617, 619, 623, 630, 859, 862, 868, 872, 878, 883, 885, 896, 898
Kessler, Jacob—368
Kessler, Jeffrey—368
Kettles, Charles—896
Khattala, Ahmed Abu—31, 733
Khoa, Pham—643
Khoi, Mai—627
Khosravi-Roodsari, Nosratollah—59
Khouri, Michael A.—893, 908
Kikawada, Hitoshi—668
Kildee, Daniel T.—542
Kilmer, Derek C.—815, 818, 820–821
Kim Jong Un—500, 663
Kim, Kyeh—878–879
Kim, Sung Y.—889, 907
King, Billie Jean—81, 445, 779

King, Gayle—866
King, John B., Jr.—277, 533, 759, 867, 902
King, Mary-Claire—608
Kinsley, Kody H.—899
Kirk, Ronald—265, 267, 270
Kistler, Cameron—730
Klobuchar, Amy J.—81, 824
Kloss, Karlie—448
Knabb, Richard—701
Knowles-Carter, Beyoncé G.—565
Kobler, Martin—689
Koch, Charles G.—430
Koch, David H.—430
Koh, Lucy Haeran—871, 902
Konar, Howard—881
Kony, Joseph—769
Kotarac, Thomas G.—897, 908
Kourosh, Naseem—888
Krah, Myer—516
Kraus, Lisa—270
Kraus, Peter A.—270
Kubiak, Gary W.—742–743, 866
Kuczynski, Pedro Pablo—896
Kusnezov, Dimitri F.—879, 904

Lacamoire, Alex—276
Lacob, Joseph—98–99
Laettner, Christian D.—703
LaHood, Raymond H.—164
Lake, Kari—885
Lakhdhir, Kamala Shirin—895, 908
Lalacos, Theocharis—898
Lammens, Philip R.—885, 906
Landrieu, Mitchell J.—41–42, 45
Langfelder, James O.—113
Lau, Israel Meir—75
Lauer, Matt—860
Lautenberg, Bonnie Englebardt—796
Lavrov, Sergey Viktorovich—146
Lawrence, Brenda L.—64, 542
Lawton, Daniel J.—285
Leahy, Patrick J.—869, 871
Leathers, Brendan—69
Leathers, Brianna—69
Leathers, Steve—69
Lebowitz, Laurence H.—270
Ledbetter, Lilly—81, 776
Ledesma, Regina Mae—551
Lee, Barbara J.—441, 903
Lee, Carol E.—530–531
Lee, David—99
Lee Hsien Loong—892
Lee, Michelle K.—607
Lee, Peter—880
Legend, John—134–135
Leggette, Jacob—449–450, 607
Leguizamo, John—100
Lehrich, Matthew—880, 904
Leonard, Mary Beth—881, 905
Lerer, Kenneth—756
Leslie, Lisa—825
Levin, Sander M.—64, 542
Levinson, Robert A.—59, 815
Lew, Jacob J.—409, 771, 839, 863, 873, 887, 897
Lewis, John R.—80, 155–156, 592, 648
Lieu, Ted W.—439
Lin, Herbert S.—880
Lin Xueling—868
Lineberger, W. Carl—889
Linehan, W. Marston—195, 197–198
Link, Terry—114
Lippman, Daniel—366
Little, Madison—603
Llorca, Rosa—330
Lobo, Rebecca—874
Locke, Gary F.—821
Löfven, Stefan—575, 578, 591, 888
Löfven, Ulla—575, 591, 888
Logan, Clayton—730
Look, Howard—195–196
Lopach, Tom—270
López, Juan Carlos—873
Lopez, Melinda—330
Losey, Brian L.—208
Loui-Schmicker, Patricia M.—901
Lovato, Demi—192
Lowe, Henry—703
Lowery, Lillian—891
Lue, Tyronn—897
Luechtefeld, David S.—114
Luján, Ben Ray—439, 821
Lundgren, Tamara L.—887
Lurie, Nicole—64, 540
Lynch, Loretta E.—1, 2, 16, 155, 172, 603–604, 893

Ma, Jack—888
Ma, Yo-Yo—781
Mabus, Raymond E., Jr.—515, 877
MacGillis, Alec—367
MacNaughton, David B.—872–873, 898
Macri, Agustina—334
Macri, Antonia—334
Macri, Francisco—334
Macri, Jimena—334
Macri, Mauricio—332, 344, 347, 356, 358, 876–877
Madigan, Lisa—423
Madigan, Michael J.—113
Malcorra, Susana—876
Malloy, Dannel P.—158
Malzone, Jillian C.—860

Mamet, Noah B.—876
Manar, Andy—120
Manchin, Joseph, III—5, 22
Manning, Peyton—743
Mansur, Akhtar Mohammad—620, 627
Marcus, Gail H.—885, 906
Markell, Jack A.—163, 175–176
Marquez McCool, Brenda Lee—783
Mars, Bruno—781
Marshall, Kathleen M.—885, 906
Martin, Allen—864
Martin, Cooper—34–36, 38, 861
Martin, Jeff—34, 861
Martin, Lisa—34–36, 38, 40–41, 861
Martinez, Valerie—897, 908
Marx, Robert J.—97
Mason, Jeff—528
Massimino, Roland—703
Mastronardi, Jim—871
Mateen, Omar—763–766, 770, 773, 783–784, 786
Mattarella, Sergio—109, 864, 866
Mayer, Larry—891
Mays, Willie H., Jr.—885
Mazyck, Centra "Ce-Ce"—886
McAdams, Rachel—529
McAuliffe, Terence R.—160, 164–165
McBride, Christian—192
McCain, John S., III—5, 181, 617, 630
McCann, Colum—287
McCarthy, Kevin O.—98
McCarthy, Regina—540, 542, 796
McClaurin, Virginia—869
McClintock, Matthew—859
McClintock, Tom—787
McConnell, A. Mitchell—166, 173, 185–186, 279, 425, 430, 432, 518, 857, 864–865, 869, 871
McDermott, James A.—3
McDonald, Robert A.—455
McDonough, Denis R.—860, 894
McDonough, John—152
McElveen, Josh—885
McEuin, Casey—455
McGuinness, J. Martin P.—278, 285, 483, 874
McGurk, Brett H.—59, 199, 873
McHugh, Lawrence D.—571
McIntosh, Amy—880, 905
McKenna, Catherine—873, 898
Mckesson, DeRay—155
McKinley, Peter M.—891, 907
McLeary, Thomas—860, 901
McManus, Brandon—743
McMillan, Therese W.—903
McNulty, William—887
McRaven, William H.—247, 255
McWatters, J. Mark—860, 901
Mead, Matthew H.—167
Mebarak Ripoll, Shakira Isabel—100, 102
Mechanic, Bahram—59
Medhat, Mai—804–805, 807, 809–810, 812–813, 821
Medicine Crow, Joseph—417
Medina, Maria Celeste—343–344
Medine, David—383
Merkel, Angela—493, 503–506, 509–511, 514, 530, 802, 840, 863, 870, 884, 898
Messi, Lionel A.—343
Michel, Charles Yvon—334, 360, 875–876
Micklethwait, John—894
Mikulski, Barbara A.—445
Miles, Thomas J.—423, 433
Miller, Jason—456
Miller, Von—742–743
Min Yingjun—5, 17
Mina, John W.—783
Mineta, Norman Y.—550
Minh, Le Luong—140
Minor, Rickey—192
Miranda, Juanita—330
Miranda, Lin-Manuel—276, 873
Mirren, Helen—529
Mistura, Staffan de—688
Modanlo, Nader—59
Modi, Narendra—488, 744, 746–748, 751–752, 889, 893
Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince—882
Monaco, Lisa O.—875, 877, 882, 889, 894, 898
Moniz, Ernest J.—169, 241, 607, 845
Monsef, Maryam—856
Montoya, Juan Pablo—100
Moore, Gwendolynne S.—215
Moore, Maya—825
Moore, Sam—192
Moore, Westley W.O.—904
Morales, Jimmy—861
Mori, Floyd—550
Mori, Shigeaki—891
Morris, Jaslyn—886
Morrison, Tevor W.—897
Morton, John E.—902
Moses, Robert P.—648
Moyers, Bill—596, 599
Muhammad Bin Nayif bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, Crown Prince—882
Muhammad bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, Deputy Crown Prince—882, 895
Muhammad, Ibtihaj—88
Muir, David—875–876
Muktar, Sabah—86, 88, 92
Muñoz, Henry R., III—129, 134, 257, 736, 738, 756
Munroe, Randall—448
Murphy, Christopher—533
Murphy, Megan—894

Murphy, Patrick E.—202, 736, 871
Murray, Akyra M.—783
Murray, Edward B.—815, 820
Murray, Patricia L.—815–816, 818, 820
Murren, Heather H.—880
Myers, Bob—98
Mykelby, Kathy—885

Nachtigal, Gayle A.—882, 905
Nadler, Jerrold L.—756
Najefi, Khadija—480
Najib Razak—654
Nashashibi, Rami—97
Nazarbayev, Nursultan—398
Neese, Timothy—704
Nelson, E. Benjamin—34
Nelson, Prince R.—467, 477
Nelson, Willie—192
Netanyahu, Benjamin—352, 355
Neubacher, Don—787, 896
Ng, Konrad—243, 850
Ng, Savita—15, 243, 345, 859
Ng, Suhaila—15, 243, 345, 859
Ngân, Dang Tran Ngoc—646
Ngân, Nguyen Thi Kim—622, 627, 890
Nicholson, Marvin D., Jr.—243, 884
Niinistö, Sauli—575, 578, 591, 886, 888
Nilsen, Ingrid—861
Nimr, Nimr al- —860
Niumatalolo, Ken—515–516
Noah, Trevor—529
Nokta, Ahmad Abu—514
Norris, Thomas R.—208, 210
Nunn, Serena D.—387–388, 429, 878
Nye, David C.—879, 904
Nye, Mary Jo—162
Nye, Mary Lou—162
Nzeyimana, Jean Bosco—804–805, 807–808, 812, 821

Obama, Malia—15, 23, 45–46, 54, 75, 82, 121, 131, 133, 199, 243–244, 257, 277–278, 286–287, 296–297, 306, 319, 323, 325, 342–343, 361, 365, 377–378, 487, 507, 519, 530, 536, 549, 562, 566, 572, 596, 629, 642, 645, 703–704, 760, 775, 778, 782, 786, 816, 826, 859, 875–877, 879–880, 893–896
Obama, Michelle—3, 8, 10, 38, 43, 46, 52–54, 71, 73, 94, 96, 99, 124–125, 130, 134–135, 138–139, 156, 159–161, 164, 191, 206, 224, 226, 230, 243, 270, 276–278, 295, 303–304, 306, 317, 321, 325, 342, 357–358, 360–362, 365, 417, 422, 467, 469–470, 479–480, 507, 519, 525, 528–529, 531, 549, 553–557, 562, 575, 597, 611–612, 697–698, 704–705, 715, 718, 740–741, 753–754, 758–759, 761, 775, 777, 779, 788, 815, 817, 827, 849, 859, 862, 866, 868–869, 873, 875–879, 881, 883–886, 888, 892, 893–896
Obama, Natasha "Sasha"—15, 23, 46, 54, 75, 82, 121, 131, 133, 199, 243–244, 257, 277–278, 286–287, 296–297, 306, 319, 323, 325, 342–343, 361, 365, 377–378, 487, 507, 519, 531, 536, 549, 562, 566, 572, 596, 629, 645, 760, 778, 786, 826, 859, 875–877, 893–896
Obergefell, James—760
O'Brien, Cecilia—317
O'Brien, Charles—317
O'Brien, Jackson R.—317
O'Brien, James—814
O'Brien, Sofia E.—317
O'Brien, Soledad—317–324
Ochefu, Daniel—702–703
O'Connor, Christopher E.—887, 908
O'Donnell, Norah—529
Oertle, Crystal—368–372, 374, 376, 380–382
Ohm, Paul—897
Olajuwon, Hakeem Abdul—88
O'Malley, Kevin F.—285
Oneal, Addy—448
O'Neal, Shaquille R.—385, 878
Ong, Winfield D.—861, 901
Ono, David—864
O'Rourke, Robert F. "Beto"—644
Orris, Allison B.—897
Ortega y Alamino, Jaime Lucas Cardinal—306, 875
Ortiz, David A. "Big Papi"—340
O'Sullivan, Kathleen M.—881, 905
Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Ismail—461, 690

Pacchiano Alaman, Rafael—898
Packnett, Brittany—155–156, 569
Paige, Marcus—703
Palmer, Alice J.—113
Palmisano, Samuel J.—151, 162, 869
Pan, Florence Y.—885, 906
Panconi, Matthew R.—596, 602
Panjabi, Chitra—445
Pantelides, Leonidas—898
Parati, Robert—730
Paredes, Elizabeth—612
Park Geun-hye—390, 860, 866, 878
Parker, Keith T.—870
Parsons, Christi—867
Pasi, Geeta—882, 905
Paskett, Electra D.—895
Pastrana, Andres—100–101
Patrick, Deval L.—121
Paul, Rand—559
Paulsen, Joseph B.—884
Pavithran, Sachin Dev—886
Pelosi, Nancy—78, 94, 98, 132, 295, 297, 439–441, 443–444, 446, 759, 775, 779, 821–822, 857, 863, 866, 880
Pelosi, Paul F., Sr.—442
Peña Nieto, Enrique—553, 827, 830, 844, 861, 886, 898

Pence, Michael R.—711
Pereira, Donald L.—892
Peres, Shimon—75, 863
Pérez, Armando C. "Pitbull"—326
Perez, Carol Z.—887, 906
Pérez, Eduardo—876
Perez, Thomas E.—81
Perreiah, Diana Bolt—889
Perry, Brandon—8
Pfeiffer, Sacha—531
Pfleger, Michael—11, 18–19
Pham, Khoa—636–637, 639, 641–642
Philip, James "Pate"—113, 124
Philip, Prince—469, 480, 883
Phillips, Wade—742
Phillips-Spencer, Anthony W.J.—898
Phu, Elizabeth M.—646
Phúc, Nguyen Xuân—622, 627, 890
Pichai, Sundar—897
Pierre, Christophe—898
Poli, Mario Aurielio Cardinal—876
Pollock, Ellen—894
Power, Samantha—877
Preston, Stephen W.—880
Priebus, Reinhold R. "Reince"—529
Pritzker, Penny S.—152, 503, 790, 792, 898
Proudfit, Joely—869
Pugh, Lisa—897
Puhl, Jennifer Klemetsrud—864, 902
Purcell, Shannon—704
Purnell, Cathy—761
Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich—146, 366, 412, 465, 477, 497, 861, 868, 870, 874, 881
Pyatt, Geoffrey R.—889, 907
Pybus, Sean A.—208

Qaduli, Abd al-Rahman Mustafa "Haji Imam" al- —360
Quackenbush, Heather—700
Quackenbush, Rachel—700
Quackenbush, Scotty—700
Quang, Tran Dai—613, 622–623, 627, 890
Quang A, Nguyen—628
Quenneville, Joel—153
Quigley, Mike—152, 423, 429
Quinn, Patrick J., III—113
Quintenz, Brian D.—872, 903

Raab-Traub, Nancy—895
Radogno, Christine—114
Rafferty, Kevin—703
Ragland, Reggie—212
Rama, Edi—881
Ramadan, Yasmin—602
Ramirez, Irma Carrillo—874, 903
Rasmussen, Lars Løkke—575, 578, 591, 886, 888
Rasmussen, Nicholas J.—894
Rasmussen, Solrun Jákupsdóttir Løkke—575, 591, 888
Rathmann, James L.—607
Rauner, Bruce V.—113
Rausch, Bill—886
Ravech, Karl—876
Rawlings, Michael S.—265
Rawlings-Blake, Stephanie C.—71
Raymond, Usher T., IV—192
Reagan, Michael—222
Reagan, Nancy Davis—222, 224, 264–265
Reagan, Ron—222
Reddick, Eunice S.—878
Reese, Thomas J.—888
Reeve, Cheryl—824–825
Reeve, Oliver—824
Reeves, Danny C.—874, 903
Regan, Geoff—849, 899
Reid, Harry M.—186, 857, 863, 866, 869, 871
Reid, Richard C.—182
Reljic, Boro—114
Rendón, Beatriz—880
Rendon, Carole Schwartz—889, 907
Renzi, Matteo—496, 510, 870, 884
Reyneri, Nelson—860, 901
Reynolds, Keenan—515
Reynolds, Michelle C.—888
Reynolds, William B., III—455–456
Rezaian, Jason—59, 531, 873
Rezaian, Mary—59
Rezendes, Michael—531
Rhimes, Shonda L.—565
Rhodan, Maya—871
Rhodes, Benjamin J.—59, 876, 883, 894
Rice, Condoleezza—602
Rice, Susan E.—59–60, 454, 865, 873, 876, 882–883, 898
Richard, Anne C.—888
Richard, Elizabeth Holzhall—867, 902
Richards, Cecile—270, 295
Richardson, John M.—515
Richmond, Cedric L.—41, 45, 50, 54
Riley, Justin L.—368, 372–373, 376–382
Ripley, Angela L. Kokosko—884, 906
Ritsema, James—870
Rivlin, Reuven—76
Rizzo, Kelly—704
Roberts, John G., Jr.—145, 292, 428
Robinson, Aaron L.—15
Robinson, A'Shawn—212
Robinson, Austin—15
Robinson, Craig M.—52–53
Robinson, Lori J.—735
Robinson, Marian—46, 52, 276, 325, 342, 549, 562, 875–877
Robinson, Rachel—875–876

Robinson, Sharon—875–876
Robinson, Todd—861
Robinson, Walter—531
Rodiles, Antonio—667
Rodriguez, David M.—877–878
Rodriguez, Julie Chavez—753
Rodriguez, Regina M.—885, 906
Rodriguez de Santos, Maria Clemencia—100
Rogero, Madeline—7
Rogers, Harold D.—368, 379, 381
Romney, W. Mitt—79, 120, 175, 217
Roof, Dylann S.—90, 766
Rosario, Dquan—49–50, 176, 376
Rose, Charlie—881, 884
Rose, Danny—134
Rosen, Jeffrey A.—875, 904
Rosenbaum, Amy—83
Rosenberg, Aaron D.—134
Rosenfield, Jim—864
Rose-Rosenberg, Gabriel F.—134
Rothman, Michael J.—860, 901
Rouhani, Hassan—59
Rouse, Peter M.—754
Rousseff, Dilma Vana—864
Rubenstein, Janice—736
Rubenstein, Robert—736
Rubio, Marco A.—148, 235, 329, 895
Rucker, Kiara—8
Rudy, Amy—262
Rudy, Kirk—262
Ruffalo, Mark—529
Ruiz Massieu Salinas, Claudia—898
Ruiz Sanchez, Gladys Marithza—898
Rush, Bobby L.—423, 429
Ruskay, John—888
Rutte, Mark—400
Ryan, Paul D.—26, 28, 94, 112, 166, 217, 278–281, 388, 441, 530, 560, 857, 864, 865

Saad, Mohammed—200
Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah, Amir—883
Saban, Nicholas L.—211–212, 861
Saban, Terry—212
Sabatini, Paul—862
Saboonchi, Ali—59
Sada Solana, Carlos Manuel—898
Sadowsky, Brian—202
Sailer, Katherine—756
Sajjan, Harjit Singh—873
Salazar, Kenneth L.—168
Salazar, Marguerite—891, 907
Salehi, Yeganeh—873
Salem, Abu—200
Salem, James—735
Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, King—459–460, 882
Salvaing, Jean-Baptiste—894
Samuelsohn, Darren—366
Sanchez, George J.—885, 906
Sandberg, Sheryl K.—779
Sanders, Bernard—147, 173, 236, 262, 329, 353, 431, 523, 530, 559–560, 664–665, 723, 757, 843, 863, 892–893
Sanders, Emmanuel—742, 744
Sandlin, Destin—861
Sani, Michael—482
Santos, Esteban—100
Santos, Martin—100
Santos Calderon, Juan Manuel—100, 865
Sapiro, Miriam—867
Sarbanes, John P.—86
Sardiñas, Mario "Chequera"—876
Sargent, Anneila I.—889
Sarra, Bernard—515
Satin, Barbara—888
Satz, Debra—899, 908
Scaffidi, Stephen—71
Scalia, Antonin G.—139, 143, 868–869
Scalia, Eugene—868
Scalia, Maureen—139
Schaaf, Elizabeth B. "Libby"—98
Schneider, Jessica—894
Scholer, Karen Gren—874, 903
Schostok, Stefan—507
Schott, Donald K.—861, 901
Schrader, Megan—892
Schreiber, Liev—529
Schumer, Charles E.—866
Schwartz, Stephen M.—417, 860, 901
Score, David A.—882
Scott, Timothy E.—528
Sedgwick, Tod—892
Selby, Myra C.—902
Seller, Jeffrey—276
Sewall, Sarah—888
Shahidi, Yara—448
Shahzad, Faisal—182
Shannon, Thomas A.—861
Sharif, Mohammad Nawaz—878
Sheehy, Jennifer—872
Shelby, Myra C.—861
Shelton, Natasha—570
Sherman, Brad—439
Sherman, Wendy R.—880
Shinzato, Kenneth Franklin—660
Short, Michael D.—387–388, 429, 878
Shults, Justin—360, 878
Shults, Stephanie—360, 878
Shumlin, Peter E.—158, 171, 173, 225
Siegel, Shelley—886
Silliman, Douglas A.—889, 907
Silva, Luis "Pánfilo"—316, 875–876

Silverman, Lawrence R.—881, 905
Simmons, Ben—41, 51, 861
Simmons, Dave—41
Simon, Elana—448
Simpson, Orenthal James "O.J."—219
Sinclair, Nicole—881
Singh, Heather—821
Singh, Manjit—888
Singh, Sudhir Steven—821
Slaughter, Sam—862
Smith, Annette Evans—883
Smith, Chrisopher H.—903
Smith, Emmitt J.—266
Smith, Evan—246–256
Smith, Gayle E.—272, 888
Smith, Kemba N.—387–388, 429, 878
Smith, Megan—448
Smith, Richard—162
Smith, Shane—888
Smith, Tyler—162
Smollett, Jussie—192
Smoot, J. Patricia Wilson—887, 906
Snow, Tessa—669
Snowden, Edward J.—254–255
Snyder, Brad—887
Snyder, Richard D.—538, 540–541, 545, 547
Soetoro-Ng, Maya—243, 345, 645, 859
Solberg, Erna—575, 578, 591, 886, 888
Soler, Cristian Miguel—330
Son, Ha Huy—628
Sonoda, Naoki—668
Sonuyi, Tolulope—66, 862
Soomro, Wasim—735
Sotillo Fernandez, Indhira—323–324
Sotomayor, Edward, Jr.—785
Sotomayor, Sonia M.—143, 263, 300, 427, 435, 754, 779
Spears, Nicole—886
Speier, K.L. Jacqueline—880
Spielberg, Steven A.—74
Spitz, Margaret R.—895
Spottiswoode, Patrick—883
Springsteen, Bruce—602
Stabenow, Deborah A.—539, 542
Steadman, Andrew C.—609, 860
Steinem, Gloria M.—775
Steinmiller, Heather A.—860, 901
Stevens, John Paul—292
Stewart, Breanna—572
Stewart, Jon—529, 555
Stewart, Ronald L.—19
Stoltenberg, Jens—414, 877
Stone, Geoffrey R.—423
Stoytchev, Tihomir Anguelov—898
Strauss, David A.—423–429, 433, 438
St. Clair, Joyce—893
Sullivan, Joe—880
Sullivan, Mike—896
Summitt, Patricia S. Head—826
Summitt, Ross "Tyler"—827
Swain, Chris—515
Swanson, Jack—92
Sweet, Kathleen M.—874, 904
Swoopes, Sheryl—825
Symington, W. Stuart—899, 908
Syverson, Dave—114
Syyerud, Kent—362
Szubin, Adam J.—772
Szymanski, Timothy—208
Szyszko, Karen—218, 872
Szyszko, Sharon—218, 872

Takai, K. Mark—612
Talon, Patrice—879
Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir—883
Tamlyn, Lucy—879
Tanaka, Masayoshi—888
Tapper, Jake—529
Tawwab, Bilal—542
Tchen, Christina M.—775
Teigen, Chrissy—134
Têtе, Dylan—886
Thomas, Demaryius—742
Thompson, Donald—604
Thompson, Klay A.—99
Thompson, Troy—516
Thomson, John "J.T."—893
Thor, Doua—550
Thorn, Daniel—730
Thorne, Adande "Swoozie"—861
Thornton, Michael E.—208, 210
Thornton, Ricardo, Sr.—888
Thrush, Glenn—863
Thulin, Inge G.—887
Thummalapally, Vinai K.—790
Tice, Austin B.—815
Tidd, Kurt W.—896
Timmons-Goodson, Patricia A.—885, 906
Timonen, Kimmo—153
Tobias, Robert M.—887, 906
Tobler, Robert—730
Tomblin, Earl R.—898
Toomey, Patrick J.—5, 22
Tororella, Lilliana L.—603
Torres, Ismael, Sr.—899
Torres, Norma—861
Torres-Castrodad, Ismael—899
Tortorella, Erica L.—603
Tortorella, Joseph L.—603
Tortorella, Samuel L.—603
Totenberg, Nina—75, 875

Totten, Dianne—596
Touadéra, Faustin Archange—877
Townsend, Lester—892
Trang, Pham Doan—628
Traum, Anne R.—885, 906
Trehan, Ranvir—867
Trevithick, Matthew—59
Troaré, Touré Lobbo—108
Trong, Nguyen Phú—622, 627, 890
Trudeau, Ella-Grace M.—226, 244
Trudeau, Hadrien—226, 244
Trudeau, Justin P.J.—226, 228, 238, 243, 528, 830, 844, 848–850, 854–856, 866, 871, 873, 894, 898–899
Trudeau, Margaret—244
Trudeau, Xavier J.—226, 244
Trump, Donald J.—148–149, 235, 259, 310, 366, 411, 420, 440, 442, 444, 530–531, 559–561, 664, 705, 712, 716, 719, 737–738, 773, 818, 822
Tsarnaev, Dzhokhar—182
Tscherrig, Emil Paul—876
Tsuboi, Sunao—891
Tú, Ngô Thùy Ngoc—644–646
Tuck, Morgan—572
Tulley, Jason D.—899, 908
Tùng, Nguyn Thanh "Sn Tùng M–TP"—645
Turbaro, Gino—345
Turbow, Sarah—881
Tureaud, Lawrence "Mr. T"—565
Turnbull, Malcolm B.—61, 860, 862, 887
Turner, Alex—892
Tydingco-Gatewood, Frances M.—889, 907
Tyson, Cicely—563

Ulmer, Mikaila—774, 779

Vallabh, Sonia—193–194, 196–198
Valladares, Gilberto "Papito"—317, 327
Van Dahlen, Barbara—886
Van Gels, Keith—153
Vargas, Juan—94
Varma, Maya—449
Varricchio, Armando—872
Vásquez, Andy "Fecundo"—876
Vasquez, Rick—886
Vazquez, Jaime—202, 206
Vergara, Sofia—100
Verrilli, Donald B., Jr.—736, 826, 881
Videragay Caso, Luis—898
Villarino, Liz—753
Villiers, Theresa—285
Vilsack, Thomas J.—172, 321
Vives, Carlos—100
Vivian, Cordy Tindell "C.T."—155–156
Voinovich, George V.—779
Voinovich, Janet Allan—779
Votel, Joseph L., III—208, 421
Vy, Lê Hoàng Uyên—636–638, 640–641, 643

Wade, Tatira—700
Wahler, Brian C.—596
Walker, Scott K.—217
Walker, William M.—177–178
Wallace, Chris—879
Wallace, Robert E.—870
Walsh, Lawrence M., Jr.—867
Walters, Derrick—208
Walton, Luke T.—98
Ware, DeMarcus—742, 866
Washington, Geovette E.—875
Wasserman Schultz, Deborah—736, 738
Weaver, Karen Williams—64, 71, 538, 540–541, 545, 547, 862
Weber, Carol—886
Weil, Stephan—507
Weiler, Todd A.—860, 901
Welsh, Betty—729
Welsh, Mark A., III—729
Welter, Jennifer—295, 297
Wen, Leana S.—370, 374–377, 380–382
Wesley, Cooper R.—385
Wesley, Howard-John—385–386
Wesley, Howard-John, II—385
West, Jerry A.—98
Westly, Christina—129, 133
Westly, Matthew—129, 133
Westly, Steve—129–130, 133
Westphal, Joseph W.—882
Whalen, Antonia—880, 905
Whalen, Lindsay—825
Wharton, D. Bruce—877, 879
Wheeler, Ashley—700
Wheeler, David—700
Wheeler, Joshua, Jr.—700
Wheeler, Matthew—700
Wheeler, Zachariah—700
Wheeler, Zack—700
White, Anne—212
White, Jason—64
White, Jesse—114
Whitebird, Francis—623
Whiting, Lynadia—886
Whitman, Meg—109
Wiesel, Elie—75, 892
Wilderotter, Maggie—880
Wilk, Elizabeth—75
Wilkins, Robert L.—753
William, Prince—883
Williams, Betty—892
Williams, Bisa—878
Williams, Dennis—64, 862

Williams, Monty—99
Williams, Rosemary Freitas—881
Williams, Yolanda "Lonnie"—892
Wilmore, Betty—529
Wilmore, Larry—529
Wilmore, Larry, Jr.—529, 565
Wilson, Constance—604
Wilson, Douglas B.—875, 904
Wilson, Frederica S.—603
Wilson, Thomas—516
Wimmer, Deanie—864
Windsor, Edith—760
Winfrey, Oprah—775, 779
Wirtz, W. Rockwell—152
Witt, Phil—885
Woodward, Shirley—895, 908
Wooten, Tyrone—886
Wright, Jerold T. "Jay"—702–703, 879
Wurwand, Jane—803

Xi Jinping—392, 394–395, 413, 866, 877
Xuan, Loc Le—646

Yang, Jenny R.—81
Yassani, Sofia—92
Yates, Sally Quillian—764, 766, 894
Ybarra, Anna—753
Yeganeh, Salehi—59
Yellen, Janet L.—880
Young, Andrew R.—895, 908
Young, Chris—882
Yousuf, Imran—783
Yovanovitch, Marie L.—889, 907
Yu, Anita—129
Yuan, Sharon H.—867

Zayani, Abdul Latif bin Rashid Al—459
Zients, Jeffrey D.—860
Zuckerberg, Mark E.—109, 805, 807, 809–813, 821, 897

Document Categories List

Addresses and Remarks
- *See also* Addresses to the Nation; Appointments and Nominations; Bill Signings and Vetoes; Interviews With the News Media; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials
- 2015 College Football Playoff National Champion University of Alabama Crimson Tide—211
- 2015 National Basketball Association Champion Golden State Warriors—98
- 2015 Stanley Cup Champion Chicago Blackhawks—152
- 2015 Women's National Basketball Association Champion Minnesota Lynx—824
- 2016 National and State Teachers of the Year—532
- 2016 Super Bowl Champion Denver Broncos—742
- African American faith and civil rights leaders, meeting with President—155
- African American History Month reception—156
- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, seventh anniversary, remarks in Jacksonville, FL—202
- Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies, awards gala dinner—550
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations-U.S. summit in Rancho Mirage, CA, opening session—140
- Baton Rouge, LA, town hall meeting and question-and-answer session at McKinley Senior High School—41
- Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument, establishment—445
- Butts, former Deputy White House Counsel Cassandra Q., eulogy—753
- Cinco de Mayo celebration—553
- CNN's "Guns in America" town hall meeting and question-and-answer session in Fairfax, VA—9
- College reporters, question-and-answer session—517
- Commander in Chief's Trophy, presentation—515
- Commutation recipients, lunch with President—387
- Congressional Friends of Ireland luncheon—279
- Congressional picnic—781
- Cybersecurity policy initiatives, announcement—111
- Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee fundraisers
  - Los Angeles, CA—439
  - Medina, WA—821
  - San Francisco, CA—441
- Democratic Governors Association—157
- Democratic Hope Fund
  - Dallas, TX, reception—265
  - Los Angeles, CA, dinner—137
  - Los Angeles, CA, reception—134

Addresses and Remarks—Continued
- Democratic National Committee fundraisers
  - Atherton, CA—129
  - Austin, TX—257, 262
  - Miami, FL—736
  - New York City—756
- Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee fundraiser in Dallas, TX—270
- Department of Defense leadership, meeting with President—421
- Detroit, MI—63
- Easter Prayer Breakfast—384
- Economy, national—104, 557
- Elkhart, IN
  - PBS NewsHour's "Questions for President Obama" town hall meeting in Elkhart, IN—714
  - Remarks—704
- Federal Emergency Management Agency, hurricane preparedness briefing—701
- Financial regulatory reform—222
- Flint, MI
  - Remarks—541
  - Water crisis, Federal Government response efforts—538
- Global Entrepreneurship Summit, panel discussion at Stanford University in Stanford, CA—801
- Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, closure of detention facilities at U.S. Naval Base—180
- Gun violence—2, 3
- "Hamilton" cast, remarks prior to musical performance—276
- Hannover, Germany
  - Hannover Messe Trade Fair, opening ceremony—503
  - Remarks—506
- Hanoi, Vietnam
  - Civil society leaders, meeting with President Obama—627
  - Remarks—628
- Havana, Cuba
  - Entrepreneurs, question-and-answer session—314
  - Gran Teatro de la Habana Alicia Alonso—325
  - U.S. Embassy staff—303
- Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, Japan—670
- Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, entrepreneurship panel discussion at DreamPlex coworking space—634
- House Democratic Issues Conference in Baltimore, MD—78
- Howard University, commencement address—563

Addresses and Remarks—Continued
Illinois General Assembly in Springfield, IL—113
Inslee, Gov. Jay R., reception in Seattle, WA—815
International Jazz Day, White House concert—525
Iran—58
Islamic Society of Baltimore in Catonsville, MD—86
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, U.S. efforts to combat
Central Intelligence Agency Headquarters in Langley, VA, meeting—452
Department of State, meeting—199
Department of the Treasury, meeting—770
Joining Forces initiative, fifth anniversary, remarks at Joint Base Andrews, MD—555
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month reception—759
Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, seventh anniversary—81
Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Iwakuni, Japan, remarks to U.S. and Japanese troops—668
Medal of Honor, SCPO Edward C. Byers, Jr., presentation—208
Memorial Day ceremony in Arlington, VA—698
National economy—219
National Governors Association
Dinner—160
Question-and-answer session—161
National Medal of Science, presentation—607
National Medal of technology and innovation, presentation—607
National Prayer Breakfast—94
National Prescription Drug Abuse and Heroin Summit, panel discussion in Atlanta, GA—367
NCAA men's basketball champion Villanova University—702
NCAA women's basketball champion University of Connecticut Huskies—571
Nuclear Security Summit
Closing session—402
Opening plenary session—400
Orlando, FL, terrorist attack
Briefing—764
Remarks in Orlando, FL—783
Remarks in Washington, DC—763
Parliament in Ottawa, Canada—849
Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, remarks in Milwaukee, WI—214
PBS, "A Tribute to Ray Charles: In Performance at the White House"—191
Plan Colombia reception—100
Precision medicine, panel discussion—192
Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor, presentation—603
Righteous Among the Nations Medal, ceremony honoring recipients at Israeli Embassy—74
Addresses and Remarks—Continued
Rutgers University–New Brunswick, commencement address in Piscataway, NJ—596
Scalia, Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin G., death, remarks in Rancho Mirage, CA—139
SelectUSA Investment Summit—790
Shima City, Japan—662
South by Southwest Interactive Festival, question-and-answer session in Austin, TX—246
Springfield, IL—123
State Department's Global Chiefs of Mission Conference—271
St. Patrick's Day Reception—284
Supreme Court decisions on affirmative action and immigration—797
Tax Code reform—418
Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting, award ceremony—362
United State of Women Summit—774
University of Chicago Law School, U.S. Supreme Court, question-and-answer session in Chicago, IL—423
University of Nebraska Omaha in Omaha, NE—34
U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, CO, commencement address—729
U.S. Conference of Mayors—71
Weekly addresses—1, 25, 55, 73, 83, 108, 138, 159, 207, 221, 264, 302, 360, 413, 444, 457, 479, 527, 562, 595, 612, 697, 739, 762, 785, 823
White House Correspondents' Association dinner—528
White House Easter Egg Roll—361
White House Mentorship and Leadership Program, lunch with participants—758
White House Science Fair—447
Women's History Month reception—295
Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride, opening ceremony—455
Yosemite National Park, CA—787
Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative, town hall meeting and question-and-answer session in Buenos Aires, Argentina—342
Young Leaders of the United Kingdom, town hall meeting and question-and-answer session in London, United Kingdom—480
Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative, town hall meeting and question-and-answer session in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam—644
Zika virus, meeting on preparedness efforts—609

Addresses to the Nation
State of the Union—26

Appointments and Nominations
See also Digest, Nominations Submitted, and Checklist at the end of this volume
Cybersecurity, Commission on Enhancing National, Chair and Vice Chair, appointment, remarks—151
U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice, nomination
Remarks—290
Teleconference call—300

Bill Signings and Vetoes
Defend Trade Secrets Act of 2016, signing remarks—573
Financial advisers conflict of interest, legislation nullifying Department of Labor rule, veto message—756
FOIA Improvement Act of 2016, signing remarks—856
Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act, signing remarks—795
Judicial Redress Act of 2015, signing remarks—188
Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act, signing remarks—856
Restoring Americans' Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act of 2015, veto message—24
Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015
Signing remarks—188
Signing statement—189
U.S. waters jurisdictional boundaries, legislation nullifying U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Environmental Protection Agency rule, veto message—63

Communications to Congress
Adversaries in space, integrated policy to deter, letter transmitting report and classified annex—668
Beijing Treaty on Audiovisual Performances, message transmitting—128
Belarus, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—761
Budget amendments for fiscal year 2017, letter transmitting—422
Burma, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—606
Central African Republic, U.S. national emergency, letter on continuation—571
Combat-equipped U.S. Armed Forces, letter on global deployment—767
Côte d'Ivoire, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—93
Cuba, anchorage and movement of vessels, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation and modification—190
Digital computer exports, letter transmitting report—729
District of Columbia fiscal year 2016 budget request, letter transmitting—85

Communications to Congress—Continued
Dominican Republic-U.S. extradition treaty, message transmitting—127
Electronic Communications in International Contracts, U.N. Convention on the Use of, message transmitting—128
Hungary-U.S. social security agreement, message transmitting—84
Independent Guarantees and Stand-By Letters of Credit, U.N. Convention on, message transmitting—126
International Trade, U.N. Convention on the Assignment of Receivables in—127
Iran
Implementation authorities outside scope of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and revocation of certain U.S. sanctions, letter—56
U.S. national emergency, letter on continuation—225
Iraq, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—607
Kazakhstan-U.S. Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, message transmitting to Senate—301
Libya
Blocking property and suspending entry into U.S., message—458
U.S. national emergency, letter on continuation—179
Malicious cyber-enabled activities, U.S. national emergency, letter on continuation—383
Marrakesh Treaty To Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled, message transmitting to Senate—125
Middle East, terrorists who threaten to disrupt the peace process, U.S. national emergency, letter on continuation—70
Montenegro, North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of, message transmitting protocol—827
North Korea
Blocking property and prohibiting transactions, message—298
U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—793
Norway, nuclear energy cooperation with U.S., message transmitting proposed agreement—780
Somalia, U.S. national emergency, letter on continuation—417
South Sudan, U.S. national emergency, letter on continuation—389
Syria, U.S. national emergency, letter on continuation—537
Ukraine, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—213

Communications to Congress—Continued
Venezuela, U.S. national emergency, letter on continuation—219
Western Balkans, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—794
Yemen, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—574
Zika virus, preparedness and response efforts, letter transmitting supplemental budget request—180
Zimbabwe, U.S. national emergency, message on continuation—214

Communications to Federal Agencies
Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010, delegation of functions and authorities, memorandum—55
National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016, delegation of authority, memorandum—72

Interviews With the News Media
Exchanges with reporters
Flint, MI—538
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia—463
Shima City, Japan—657, 662
Washington, DC—387
White House—104, 184, 222, 418, 517, 557, 764, 797
Interviews
ABC, "World News Tonight With David Muir" program—875–876
Atlantic magazine—863, 870
BBC News—883
Bloomberg News—894
BuzzFeed News—888
CBS, "CBS This Morning" program—866, 881
CBS, "Late Show With Stephen Colbert"—866
CBS News—862–863
Channel NewsAsia—868
CNN—884
CNN, "Anthony Bourdain Parts Unknown" program—890
CNN en Español—873
Colorado Springs Gazette—892
DiCaprio, Leonardo—870
ESPN—874, 876
Facebook Live—897
Fox News, "Fox News Sunday" program—879
KABC in Los Angeles, CA—864
KCCI in Des Moines, IA—885
KCNC in Denver, CO—864
KPIX in Oakland, CA—864
KSAZ in Phoenix, AZ—885
KSL in Salt Lake City, UT—864
Los Angelese Times—867
Miranda, Lin-Manuel—873

Interviews With the News Media—Continued
Interviews—Continued
National Geographic, "Explorer" program—895
NBC, "The Ellen DeGeneres Show"—867
NBC, "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon"—893
NBC, "Today" program—860
New York Times—885
NHK News—888
NPR—875, 898
PBS, "Charlie Rose" program—884
Players' Tribune website—893
Politico, "Off Message" podcast—863
Rutgers University Daily Targum—887
Time magazine—871
VICE News—888
WCAU in Philadelphia, PA—864
WDAF in Kansas City, MO—885
WISN in Milwaukee, WI—864, 885
WKRC in Cincinnati, OH—885
WMUR in Manchester, NH—885
WWBT in Richmond, VA—864
Yahoo! Finance—881
YouTube hosts—861
Joint news conferences
Argentina, President Macri—332
Canada, Prime Minister Trudeau—228, 830
Cuba, President Castro—304
Germany, Chancellor Merkel—493
Mexico, President Peña Nieto—830
United Kingdom, Prime Minister Cameron—467
Vietnam, President Quang—613
News conferences
February 16—141
April 1—407

Joint Statements
Association of Southeast Asian Nations, leaders—149
Canada, Prime Minister Trudeau
Climate, clean energy, and environment partnership—844
Climate, energy, and Arctic leadership—238
Softwood lumber—848
China, President Xi
Climate change—394
Nuclear security cooperation—395
Group of Seven nations, leaders—673
Gulf Cooperation Council leaders—460
India, enduring global partnership with U.S.—746
Japan, Prime Minister Abe—404
Kazakhstan, President Nazarbayev, nonproliferation and nuclear security cooperation—398
Mexico, President Peña Nieto, climate, clean energy, and environment partnership—844

Joint Statements—Continued
Nuclear Security Summit leaders
2016 Communique—405
Global nuclear security, strengthening efforts—406
U.S.-Nordic States leaders—581
Vietnam, President Quang—623

Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials
See also Interviews With the News Media; Joint Statements
Abu Dhabi, Crown Prince Mohammed—882
Afghanistan
Chief Executive Officer Abdullah—872
President Ghani—872
Albania, Prime Minister Rama—881
Argentina, President Macri—356, 358, 876–877
Australia, Prime Minister Turnbull—61, 862, 887
Belgium, Prime Minister Michel—875–876
Brazil, President Rousseff—864
Burma
Member of Parliament Aung San Suu Kyi—879
President Htin Kyaw—879
Canada, Prime Minister Trudeau—226, 243, 866, 873, 894, 898–899
China, President Xi—392, 866
Colombia, President Santos—865
Cuba, President Castro—876
Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso—894
Denmark, Prime Minister Rasmussen—575, 578, 591, 888
Ecuador, President Correa—882
Finland, President Niinistö—575, 578, 591, 888
France, President Hollande—397, 870, 875, 884
Germany, Chancellor Merkel—505, 863, 870, 884, 898
Iceland, Prime Minister Jóhannsson—575, 578, 591, 888
India, Prime Minister Modi—744, 893
Iraq, Prime Minister Abadi—859, 889
Ireland, Prime Minister Kenny—278
Italy
President Mattarella—109, 866
Prime Minister Renzi—870, 884
Japan, Prime Minister Abe—390, 657, 670, 860, 866, 891
Jordan, King Abdullah—184, 861
Kenya, President Kenyatta—897
Kuwait, Amir Sabah—883
Mexico, President Peña Nieto—827, 861, 886, 898
Netherlands, Prime Minister Rutte—400
Nordic States, leaders—578
North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Secretary General Stoltenberg—414

Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials—Continued
Northern Ireland
Deputy First Minister—874
First Minister—874
Norway, Prime Minister Solberg—575, 578, 591, 888
P5-plus-1 leaders—399
Pakistan, Prime Minister Sharif—878
Peru, President-elect Kuczynski—896
Philippines, President-elect Duterte—888
Qatar, Amir Tamim—883
Russia, President Putin—861, 868, 870, 874, 881
Saudi Arabia
Deputy Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman—895
King Salman—459, 882
South Korea, President Park—390, 860, 866
Sweden, Prime Minister Löfven—575, 578, 591, 888
Turkey, President Erdogan—862, 869, 878, 889, 895, 899
United Arab Emirates, Armed Forces Deputy Supreme Commander Mohammed—882
United Kingdom
Labor Party Leader Corbyn—883
Prime Minister Cameron—865, 870, 883–884, 898
Prince William and Prince Harry—883
Queen Elizabeth—883
Vietnam
Communist Party General Secretary Trong—890
National Assembly Chairwoman Ngan—890
President Quang—622, 890
Prime Minister Dung—868
Prime Minister Phúc—890

Resignations and Retirements
Austin, Gen. Lloyd J., III, retirement, statement—422
Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board Chairman, resignation, statement—383
U.S. Solicitor General, resignation, statement—736
White House Director of Legislative Affairs, resignation, statement—83

Statements by the President
See also Bill Signings and Vetoes; Joint Statements; Resignations and Retirements
Armenian Remembrance Day—478
Ash Wednesday—125
Burma, Inauguration of Htin Kyaw as President—389
California Legislature
Passage of legislation to expand paid family leave—445
Passage of legislation to raise minimum wage and provide paid sick leave—417
Crash of U.S. Marine Corps CH–53E helicopters in Hawaii—73

Statements by the President—Continued
Deaths
Ali, Muhammad—740
Bennett, former Sen. Robert F.—554
Butts, Cassandra Q., former Deputy White House Counsel—697
Chavez, Helen Fabela—753
Howe, Gordie—761
Mansur, Akhtar Mohammad—627
Medicine Crow, Joseph—417
Nelson, Prince R.—467
Reagan, former First Lady Nancy Davis—222
Summitt, Patricia S. Head—826
Voinovich, former Sen. George V.—779
District of Columbia's passage of legislation to raise minimum wage—826
Easter—360
Education reform—536
European Reassurance Initiative—85
Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, International Day of Zero Tolerance for—108
Georgia Legislature's passage of legislation on criminal justice reform—517
HIV/AIDS in the U.S., 35th anniversary—740
Holocaust Remembrance Day—549
Homophobia and Transphobia, International Day Against—605
International Women's Day—224
Israel, Rep. Steven J., decision not to seek reelection—8
Juneteenth—789
King, John B., Jr., Senate confirmation as Secretary of Education—277
McDermott, Rep. James A., decision not to seek reelection—3
New York Legislature's passage of legislation to raise minimum wage and provide paid family leave—416
Statements by the President—Continued
North Korea, U.N. Security Council sanctions—213
Oregon Legislature's passage of legislation to raise minimum wage—213
Orthodox Christmas—8
Orthodox Easter—525
Passover—479
Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, sixth anniversary—331
Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act, congressional passage—847
Ramadan—741
Roe v. *Wade* Supreme Court decision, 43d anniversary—73
Rwandan genocide, 22d anniversary—438
Takai, Rep. K. Mark, decision not to seek reelection—612
Thailand, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, 70th anniversary of accession to throne—752
Torture, International Day in Support of Victims of—824
Trans-Pacific Partnership, signing—93
United Kingdom, European Union membership referendum—814
U.S. hostages abroad and personnel recovery efforts, first anniversary of directive—814
U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice, selection of nominee—289
Vermont Legislature's passage of legislation to require employers to provide paid sick leave—225
Vesak, observance—611
Whole Woman's Health v. *Hellerstedt*, U.S. Supreme Court decision—826
World Refugee Day—793